

LORE OF THE TRADITIONS



A Sourcebook for
Mage 20th Anniversary Edition

LORE OF THE TRADITIONS



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Special Thanks

To the giants whose shoulders we stand upon. To every developer, writer, Storyteller, and player who has helped shape the **World of Darkness** and **Mage: The Ascension** for three decades. We hope our words have honored you.



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Table of Contents

Hacking Concordia	8	Decline of Dogma	24
		<i>Shì-Rén</i>	25
		<i>Lì-Hài</i>	25
Introduction	10	Rise of Do	25
The Council of		Kamikaze War	25
Nine Mystick Traditions	10	Grand Convocation	25
When Traditions Change	10	The Fifth Age	25
Theme: <i>Where Do We Go from Here?</i>	11	Current Events	27
Mood: <i>Are We the Baddies?</i>	11	Jnani: Wanderers	27
The Nine	12	Kannagara: Monks	28
Origins of the Council	12	Lì-Hài: Utilitarians	28
The March of the Nine	13	Shì-Rén: Bureaucrats	28
The Council Through History	14	Vajrapani: Warriors	28
Current State	15	Wulóng: Dragon Wizards	28
Conflicts Within	16	Notable Personalities	29
The Council and Other Factions	17	Yanhu	29
Future Fates	19	Hyeonmyeong Sunim	30
Chapter One:		Hyeonmyeong	30
Akashic Brotherhood	21	Xiaofeng Qiu	30
Overview	21	Sataghni	30
History	23	Meiling Xiao	31
The Third Age	23	Jinyú Xi	31
The Fourth Age	24	Nu Ying	31
<i>The Himalayan Wars</i>	24	Paradigm	32
		Draladharmā: The Power of the Universe	32
		<i>The Akashic Record:</i>	

<i>Guide to Draladharmā</i>	32
<i>Do: The Way to Draladharmā</i>	32
Common Practices	33
<i>New Mage Practice: Qi Manipulation</i>	33
Common Instruments	34
<i>New Instrument: Qi tools</i>	34
<i>New Instrument: Mantras</i>	34
<i>New Instrument: Memories</i>	34
Wonders	34
••• <i>Dragon Pearls</i>	35
Unlikely Allies	35
The Disparate Alliance	35
The Technocracy	35

Chapter Two: The Celestial Chorus 37

Overture	37
History	37
The First Age — Soloists	37
The Second Age — The Ensemble Forms	38
The Third Age — Vanishing Voices	38
The Fourth Age —	
Desperation and Reintegration	40
Current Issues	41
Anchorites and Hermits	41
Returning Harmonies	41
Mortal Belief	41
Quiet and the Mad	42
The Loss of the Guardian Orders	43
The Apocalypics	43
Magick and Practices	44
Optional Rule: Stable Wellsprings	44
Optional Rule: Modified Great Works	45
Prayer as an Instrument	45
Rotes	45
<i>Palimpsest</i>	45
<i>Dismiss the Discordant</i>	45
Members	46
<i>The Committee of Vocation Assemblies</i>	46
<i>The Fellowship of Eminent Music</i>	47
Notable Personalities	48
Angeli Soledad	48
Josh Cohen (Yehoshua ben Moshe haKohen)	48
<i>Angel Tear Daggers</i>	49

Unlikely Allies	50
Relations with the Technocracy	50
Relations with the Disparates	50
Balmoral Associates	51

Chapter Three: The Cult of Ecstasy 53

Disciplines of Madness	53
History: A Heritage of Heresy	53
The Dance of Memory	54
<i>Behold a Convocation</i>	54
<i>Electric Wizards</i>	55
Current Events	56
Reflection and Reform	56
Wired Ecstasy	57
Cult Out, Sahajiya In	57
The Updated	
Code of Ananda	58
Future Fates	59
<i>NHC: The New Horizon Council</i>	59
<i>A Fallen Cult</i>	60
<i>A Bridge Against the Dark</i>	60
Notable Personalities	60
<i>Devika Kumari Shrivana</i>	60
<i>Lee Ann Millner</i>	61
Paradigm	63
Antinomianism and the Nightside	63
Ecstatic Paradigms	63
<i>All is Now and Now is All</i>	63
<i>Break It Up</i>	64
<i>We are the Champions</i>	65
Ecstatic Practices	66
<i>Shadow Work</i>	66
<i>Tantra</i>	66
Ecstatic Instruments	67
<i>Entheogens</i>	67
<i>Sigils</i>	67
Unlikely Allies	68
Money, and Lots of It	68
Passionate Dreamers	68
Dancing Common Ground	68
Appreciation for	
Creative Decadence	69
A Friend of Courage	69

Chapter Four: The Dreamspeakers **71**

Overview	71
History	72
Current Events	74
Notable Personalities	77
<i>Sister Moriah</i>	78
<i>Báðkú</i>	79
Paradigm	80
Rotes	82
<i>Bullet-Rider's Blessing</i>	82
<i>Dwennimmen</i>	82
Unlikely Allies	83
The Traditions	83
The Technocracy	84
The Disparate Alliance	84
Future Fates	85

Chapter Five: The Euthanatos **87**

Overview	87
History	88
Prehistory	88
The Himalayan War	88
Convocations	88
Empire	89
The House of Helekar and World War II	89
Current Events	90
Notable Personalities	93
<i>The Thistle of Pwyll</i>	93
<i>Shweta Nagasar</i>	93
<i>Lewis Hook</i>	94
Paradigm	95
Euthanatoi Paradigms	95
Focus: Sacrifice	97
Rotes	97
<i>Blood for the Ghosts</i>	97
<i>The Last Sacrifice</i>	97
Flaw	97
<i>Scarred Avatar</i>	98
Wonders	98
••• <i>Antaratma</i>	98
Unlikely Allies	99

The Disparate Alliance	99
<i>The Itz'at</i>	99
<i>Navalon</i>	99
The Technocracy	100
Future Fates	101

Chapter Six: The Order of Hermes **103**

Overview	103
History	104
Bygone Origins	104
The Common Era	104
Founding of the Houses	105
The Late Mythic Age	106
The First Massassa War and The Pogrom	106
The Grand Convocation	106
The Dwindling	106
Modern Revival	107
Endings and Beginnings	107
Current Events	108
Notable Personalities	110
<i>Master Iyeoka Sophia bani Shaea</i>	110
<i>Kallisti, "High Priestess" of House Xaos</i>	110
<i>Master Zagadka Vandamal bani Criamon</i>	111
Paradigm	112
<i>Common Instruments</i>	112
Additional Secondary Abilities	113
<i>Enochian</i>	113
<i>Umbrood Protocols</i>	114
The Naming of a Hermetic Mage	114
Hermetic Wonders	114
•• <i>Game of Senet</i>	115
••• <i>Imphepho Wierook</i>	115
•••• <i>Waidan Ding</i>	115
Unlikely Allies	116
The Disparate Alliance	116
The Technocracy	116

Chapter Seven: The Sons of Ether **119**

<i>The Society of Ether</i>	119
All, or None: Toward a Reconstitution of Wonder	119
History	120

Medieval Origins	120
Modernity, Industry, and Expansion	120
War and Tradition	121
<i>Hollow Earth</i>	122
<i>A Matter of Minor Corrections</i>	122
Postmodernity	122
Pre-Millennialism	124
Current Events	125
Pop-Culture Protagonists	125
All, or None	125
Hard Science, Weird Science	126
Go Big, or Go Home	127
Notable Personalities	128
<i>Dr. Elias Waldman</i>	128
<i>Risa Yemana-Mercure</i>	128
<i>Kapitènn Kardan Harris</i>	129
Paradigm	130
Wonders	130
• to ••• <i>Dümerang Blade (Device)</i>	130
•••• <i>Kitab al-Alacir</i>	131
•••• <i>The Last Caern (Device)</i>	131
Unlikely Allies	132
The Disparate Alliance	132
Marauders	132
The Technocracy	132
<i>Balance and Orientation</i>	133

Chapter Eight: The Verbena 135

Life Among the Green	135
A Chronicle of the Old Ways	136
<i>The Aeduna</i>	136
<i>The Cosians</i>	136
<i>Rome and Mona</i>	136
<i>The Burning Times</i>	136
<i>Nightshade and William Groth</i>	137
<i>The First Coven</i>	137
<i>March of Empire</i>	137
<i>A New Age</i>	137
<i>Time of Aquarius</i>	138
Modern Verbenae	138
Country Witch, City Witch	138
<i>Techno-Wicca</i>	139
Blood of the Wyck	139
Druid, Shaman, Witch, Healer	140
Life, Death, Rebirth	141

Notable Personalities	142
<i>Kaya Shula-Fairmont</i>	142
<i>Ashe Lombard</i>	142
<i>Takoda Walking-Bear</i>	143
<i>Cybele</i>	143
Craft-ways	144
<i>The Great Rite</i>	144
<i>Blood</i>	145
<i>Herbs</i>	145
<i>Creation</i>	146
Wonders	146
• <i>Candle of Communion</i>	146
•• <i>Mama Cybele's Tea Collection</i>	146
••• <i>Grand Book of Shadows</i>	146
Friends and Frenemies	147
Children of Aeduna	147
<i>Rivals</i>	147
<i>Hedge Witches</i>	147
The Disparate Alliance	147
Technocratic Allies	148
Night-Folk	148
<i>Garou</i>	148
<i>Kindred</i>	148
<i>Kithain</i>	148
<i>Dearly Departed</i>	149

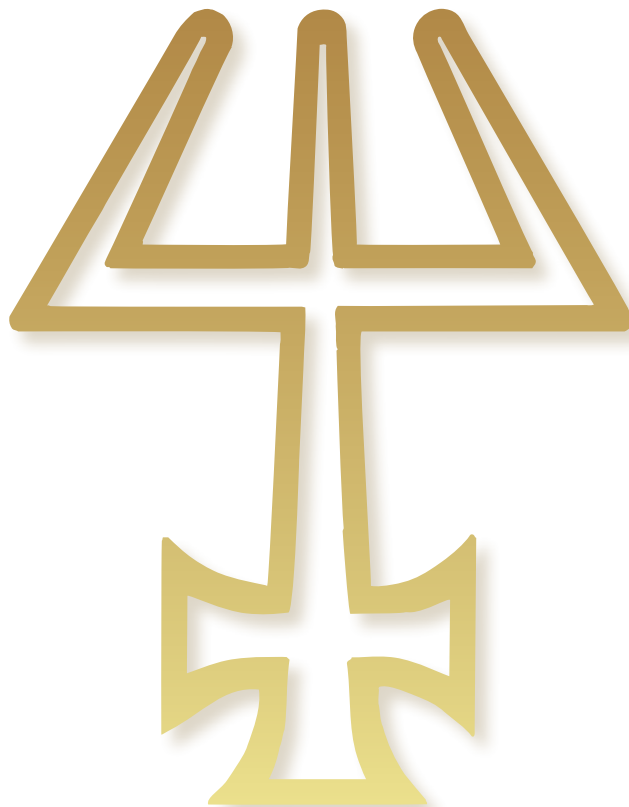
Chapter Nine: The Virtual Adepts 151

History	152
A Computational Explosion	152
A Growing Conscience	153
Departure	154
In the Traditions	154
The New Millennium	155
Current Events	155
Virtual Adepts vs. Mercurial Elite	155
The Fight for the Digital Web	156
Beyond the Web	156
Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)	157
Calculated Rebellion	158
Notable Personalities	158
<i>Marisol "Justicio" Coronado</i>	158
<i>Abina "Chanticleer" Van Der Byl</i>	158
<i>Other Personalities</i>	159
Paradigm	160
Paradigm: Platonism/Mathematicism	160

Practice: Postmodernism/Hacker Analysis	161
Wonders	161
•• Rod Logic Computer	161
Rotes	162
NFTs (Non-Fungible Tass/Talismans)	162
Save State	162
Locate Geospatial Nodal Point	162
Unlikely Allies	163
The Disparate Alliance	163
The Technocratic Union	164
The Strategic Prognostications and Data Dispersal Unit (SPDDU)	164
Void Engineer Cybernauts	164
Future Fates	165

Appendix: Infamous and Influential Mages 166

Traditionalists	166
Dante	166
Plot Hooks	167
Marianna of Balador	168
Plot Hooks	169
Mark Hallward Gillian	169
Plot Hooks	170
Porthos Fitz-Empress	171
Plot Hooks	172
Theora Hetrick	172
Plot Hooks	173
The Vile	175
Jodi Blake	175
Plot Hooks	176
Wild Cards	177
Secret Agent John Courage	177
Plot Hooks	178



A person wearing a VR headset and a suit with glowing red and orange lights is interacting with a large, colorful, abstract digital screen. The screen displays a vibrant, multi-colored landscape with green, blue, and red hues. The person is holding a green rectangular device in their right hand, which is touching the screen. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a virtual environment.

HACKING CØNCØRDIA

I'm in! Anyaza crowed triumphantly to herself. The enchanted virtual reality gear strapped to her body and wired straight into her neural network gave her a unique perspective on the city which normally took tremendous magical power to access. Well, still took. Anyaza's VR gear had taken years to craft. More than Wonder, more than modem, her equipment had at long last granted her access to the legend among mages: Concordia.

Anyaza's relation faded quickly. At first, she thought her gear needed some percussive maintenance. But banging on cords and outlets and relays proved ineffective. She returned to the visual output. The framerate hadn't broken. But the frames. Something was wrong with the frames. Or, what they depicted.

Anyaza's perception shifted wildly second by second. She saw a majestic alabaster city. A smoking ruin. A stainless steel metropolis. Another smoking ruin, different from the last. A fairytale castle. Stranger ruins. Mars? At first, she didn't know what to make of these images and reached out to pull the plug. Then, as another iteration of

Concordia flashed before her virtual eyes, this one overrun by vampires, she realized.

She wasn't hooked into Concordia as it was. Somehow, her bypassing the Gate of Correspondence led her to Concordia as it existed across the multiverse. Concordia ruined, Concordia surviving, Concordia thriving. She hadn't hacked into one Concordia — she'd somehow found the place where all Concordias existed, everywhere.

The Adept jerked her hand back from the power cord and checked her logs. As she had suspected and feared, the data had become irreparably corrupt. She might parse something useful out later, but without a valid record, she couldn't hope to replicate the processes which had brought her to this strange crossroads of Concordias.

This wasn't a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity; it was a once-in-a-dozen-lifetimes opportunity. She indulged in a moment of self-congratulation. What she'd just accomplished, she didn't think even Porthos Fitz-Empress could have done. Only a moment, however. Anyaza had work to do.

The Virtual Adept pushed onward, watching the landscape flicker and fade around her. A bit disorienting at first, but her eyesight adapted quickly. She began picking out patterns, convinced that some of the ever-changing Concordias were the same. A wrecked spaceship appeared in some versions, a constant signifier of a Technocratic victory. The fairytale castle's architecture seemed not to change much, either.

Clearing her log, Anyaza began recording data of a different sort. The castle appeared only 3.24% of the time; the spaceship, 13.46%. Did those numbers correlate to the likelihood of each outcome? How often did each Concordia manifest across the multiverse's infinite variations? Could she somehow stabilize a variant of Concordia and explore it?

As Anyaza walked, the flickering images began holding still the longer she observed them. Instead of each reality lasting micro-seconds, the images began lasting a few heartbeats longer. Extending her magical senses and flipping a few switches on her VR gear, Anyaza seized hold of one particularly intriguing reality. She'd seen it only 1.25% of the time but wanted to know how in any reality vampires might overrun Concordia.

She held onto the image and, to her delight, found this reality resisted shifting as long as she concentrated on it. Almost immediately, however, Anyaza regretted her victory. She shouldn't have been surprised to learn that a vampire's ideas of conquering reality included pens full of miserable, anemic blood-pets and an eternally clouded, gloomy sky. Anyaza flipped a switch back and released her hold on this reality. Immediately, the vampire-reality dissipated and gave way to an alabaster city.

Anyaza gasped in wonder, catching hold of this reality before it faded. Horizon, before the fall. Or perhaps a never-fallen Horizon. Anyaza observed crystal spires reaching into the sky, an architectural detail she never remembered anyone who'd been to Horizon describing. Not the Horizon she knew, then, but one which had grown strong enough to resist attacks by the Technocracy.

Beautiful golden gates stood open, welcoming her to the city. No one stood guard, but even the rankest neophyte could sense the crackle of heavy warding magic surrounding the entrance. No doubt some terrible forces waited to vaporize an enemy. Or trap its soul in a crystal bottle. Or... Anyaza thought of any number of awful fates.

Well, nothing for it. She'd built her VR gear with more than a few fail-safes. Any lethal attack should just transport her back into her body. She'd be a bit nauseous, but alive. Steeling her nerves, Anyaza stepped over the threshold.

Energy buzzed over her, while tendrils of inquisitive magic reached into her mind. Anyaza had no time to react

before the magic finished and faded. She passed whatever test the gates had. Onward, then.

Anyaza fought the temptation to see what other Concordias waited for discovery. The alabaster Concordia only appeared .75% of the time. Vampires would sooner take over the city than the whole of magery achieve this. She saw market stalls selling any number of alien fruits, identified representatives of every Tradition (and some she couldn't place at all) walking peacefully through the streets.

Before she knew it, she was there. The grand library of Concordia, grander and more expansive than her wildest dreams. Unlike the gates to the city, however, the doors here remained firmly locked. The security mechanism was unlike anything Anyaza had ever seen. Unfamiliar inlays conducted magical energy to a central console. A keypad of some kind? Anyaza poked at it a bit. Light flashed in response, the universal red of warning.

She backed off, frustrated. Then, inspiration struck.

Another flip of a switch, and Anyaza stood on a wide, blank plain. A Concordia never settled. A moment passed, and she stood in a far more familiar Concordia. The acrid smell of burnt paper hung in the air, the buildings around her reduced to rubble. A few sparkly stone shards glittered from under the ruined shelves, the remains of smashed and destroyed Wonders. The library door, little more than burnt cinders piled at her feet.

Anyaza held onto this Concordia just long enough to position herself firmly within the library's ruins. All the books were gone from this iteration of Horizon. Stolen or burned or, less likely, rescued. Anyaza allowed herself a moment of grief. This was the Concordia she knew. She looked over the ruined shelves with a tinge of irony. Broken and bare. She hadn't thought everything would be gone. If she'd succeeded in her original goal, she'd have arrived here bitterly disappointed.

Anyaza released her hold on this reality, then began gasping for air. Water! Deep enough that her eardrums reacted immediately to the pressure. She struggled against the lightless water, not knowing which way was up. The life-preservation protocol on her gear initialized and Anyaza reached out with a desperate No!

She fell to her knees gasping when the water disappeared, leaving another Concordia in its wake. Not quite the gold and alabaster library, but at the very least a Concordia that had neither drowned nor burned. Anyaza decided to hold onto this one, seeing shelves full to bursting with old leather-bound books and a man dressed in monk's robes pass holding a high-end computer tablet in his hands.

Time to get to work.

Introduction

"It is a fragile Path we Awakened walk, more so those of us who seek to balance stasis, darkness and insanity. The voices of those who went before us can guide our steps along that Path, if we care to listen."

— Porthos Fitz-Empress, "The Fragile Path"



We stare at ashes as the sun comes up. In the distance, voices rise and motors rev. Scents of cannabis and coffee drift across the plain. Aching limbs stretch toward the sky. Smoke from last night's revels curls in the early morning air.

Night passes into day, each one rich with possibilities.

Bodies unfold from tents. Hands pass drinks and food around. Voices rough from last night's ceremonies now speak softly in the morning light. We share a communion that will carry us forward. When we go our separate ways today, the things we built and burned together will bind and bear us through life until we meet again.

The Council of Nine Mystick Traditions

When Traditions Change

It all seemed so simple once: *Magick good, technology bad*. As both fictional mages and players of **Mage** realize, however, nothing is quite that simple. Magick, as **Mage** continually asserts, is technology. Whether that technology involves concoctions, crossbows, or computer networks is a matter of semantics. The line between a wizard in his tower and a hacker in her basement gets pretty damned fuzzy, after all,

once you realize they're doing the same thing with different tools and rhetoric. As our not-so-new-millennium speeds toward its fourth decade, those simple old delusions point toward a troubling new question: *Now what?*

"Now what?" indeed.

In an age of transformation, what does "tradition" even mean? That question, for mages of the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions, isn't merely academic. The 21st century

(with or without an Avatar Storm) poses dilemmas that medieval wizards could never have imagined: issues of power, ethics, technology, even reality itself. Where “tradition” once sounded comforting and stable, that term begs vital questions now: Which features of “the Old Ways” must change when confronted by the new, and which elements were worth preserving to begin with?

Our world is burning. Plagues rage, conspiracies bloom, and irrationality rules the day. Old certainties about right and wrong, dynamism and stasis, gender, identity, nations and needs, even what is and is not “real” in the greater scheme of things, all become casualties of the human experience. This situation is as true for the fictional willworkers of **Mage: The Ascension** as it is for folks arguing about it on the internet. In 1993, when **Mage** first appeared, its young creators thought we knew everything. Now, over 30 years later, the scope of what we did *not* know becomes more obvious with each social media debate. For better and worse, the internet – a thing that hardly existed in White Wolf’s early days – reveals how much larger and more complex the human experience of “reality” can be. In the fictional world of **Mage**, the same realizations occur. Where medieval wizards and witches once believed that an Enlightened elite had the absolute right to impose their will upon the world, today’s mages reply *Do we REALLY? And did we EVER?*

That conflict – the tension between what we thought we knew was right, and what we did when we thought we knew it – is a primary theme within this book.

Theme: Where Do We Go from Here?

Lore of the Traditions doesn’t simply rehash material from older books. Instead, it explores where **Mage**’s nine Traditions began and where they’re headed now.

As will become obvious throughout the following chapters, change is not a new thing for the Council of Nine. At the time of its foundation, the idea of an alliance between warring creeds and distant cultures seemed almost inconceivable. Setting aside most divisions of their era, the founders of our fictional Traditions crafted an unstable yet ambitious coalition to preserve what they realized was a precarious ideal in a rapidly changing world. For the next 600 years, those “traditions” changed with the times while guiding the Masses (again, for better and worse) in turn. Though they often seemed like throwbacks in an increasingly modern world, those mages incorporated, and sometimes implemented, concepts like democracy, equality, religious tolerance, and industrial technology – concepts alien to the Council’s medieval origins. Such transformations were, as they always are, as controversial in **Mage**’s fictional world as they can be in our own. Balancing Static tradition with Dynamic transformation has been the Council’s true Path all along.

On a meta level, this book explores the ways in which the game-world of **Mage** changes with the times. In 1993, phrases like *gender identity* and *cultural appropriation* existed on the fringes of popular discourse if those terms existed at all; in the 2020s, such concepts are inescapable. The realities of such things have always existed, of course. Most folks simply didn’t see them, chose not to see them, or didn’t know how to discuss them openly. While certain **Mage** fans are probably bristling at the idea of tackling those subjects now, **Mage** – for all its fictions – has always been a game about reality, the ways through which people can change it, and the effects (pro and con) of changing a world we all share whether we want to share it or not. You, the reader, don’t need to address such topics around your table; for the authors and designers, though, change is literally the heart of **Mage**.

This book, then, reveals how the Traditions have changed over time and continue to change now.

Mood: Are We the Baddies?

In the original **Mage** metaplot, heroic Traditions warred against malign Technocrats. The more you look at it, however, the more questionable such ideas become. If an old-school witch waters her trees with human blood, and a cyborg comes to shut her down, which one of them has the moral high ground, and what happens to the Sleepers caught in the crossfire when those forces clash? That term, “Sleepers,” reveals a condescending arrogance, too. Sure, the Council mages have a certain swashbuckling romanticism about them, and their ideas certainly seem preferable to the stompy boots of Technocratic dominance. If that scrappy underdog blows up your neighborhood, however, in the name of a reality where the average person has good reasons to fear the witch next door, the morality of her approach seems somewhat debatable. Viewed from an outside perspective, Tradition mages aren’t “good guys” after all. They’re really kind of monstrous, and the fact that they seldom see that potential monster in the mirror lends their side of the Ascension War a nightmarish quality if you happen to be in their way.

Mage 20 presents a metaplot-neutral setting where each Storyteller gets to choose the perspective, events, and direction of their game:

Awakened Heroes

In a more “traditional” **Mage** chronicle, Council mages retain their heroic allure, challenging the problems within their own ranks as readily as they challenge Technocrats and Fallen corrupters. Such mages – usually, but not always, young – pursue ethical ambitious and compassionate ideals. They face hard questions about status and bigotry, identity and consequences that their elders seldom thought

Future Fates: What Council?

Most of this chapter assumes you're running the default **Mage 20th Anniversary Edition** timeline: Horizon was destroyed, but the Traditions are rebounding from this catastrophe. Most of it's still valid if Horizon never fell. If you're running a game where the Council of Nine is no more, skip to the Future Fates section at the end of the chapter. There's still something for you.

about at all. Through their efforts, the medieval framework of the Council shifts to accommodate a larger and more complicated world. That Council moves forward, embracing the Dynamism at True Magick's core.

Enlightened Tyrants

A darker approach views Council mages as hidebound tyrants whose ideals cloak selfish ends. Like the mad coots of Doissetep, they scheme and duel and treat lesser creatures as collateral damage. From the perspective through which the Technocracy and Crafts views their Nine Traditions rivals, Council mages are entitled brats whose power can level cities if they don't get their way. They might talk a good line, perhaps providing cannon fodder if Nephandi and Marauders drop by, but they can't be truly *trusted*, ever. Even if you prefer a heroic view of the Traditions, remember that this option is the way such mages appear to those who don't belong to their Awakened clique.

Malignant Titans

In the most fearsome possibility, Tradition mages are outright monsters: haughty wizards and bloody witches, mad scientists and reality breakers, mystic killers, and drugged-out psychopaths. Whether the Council has Fallen in the Nephandic sense (see **Mage 20**, p. 139), or is simply a product of collective egotism, these Tradition mages "do what they will" and damn anyone caught in their path. Their good intentions are a smokescreen, and their existence remains a threat to Reality itself.

Warriors Reconciled

Perhaps the Traditions and Technocracy have begun to put aside their War. Like John Courage and Lee Ann Millner, they recognize their shared heritage and mutual enemies. This shift from the original **Mage** metaplot sees the Council and Conventions declare a truce. Joining forces, they defy corruption and destruction and chaos on a global scale. In our era, this may be the most heroic and empowering approach of all: one in which we overcome our differences to become the saviors our age so desperately needs.

Which Traditions, then, will you find in this book? All of them. The *Future Fates* sections within each of the following chapters presents a tool kit for building the **Mage** chronicle you want.

Which approach to those Traditions will you embrace? That depends on the world you wish to see. To play with. To create.

Ultimately, the magick is yours.

Let's go see where it leads us.

The Nine

The Council of Nine Mystick Traditions—the Traditions, for short—is a lot of things: the alliance of mages who espouse freedom over control; one side of the Ascension War; even, in some very specific definitions (mostly their own), the good guys. They're also, like many of the best magickal effects, the result of an unlikely set of occurrences. Numerous mages found reason to work together, managed to wrestle down their philosophical and practical objections to one another, and held together so long the institution of the Council gained inertia of its own.

The Council is a snapshot of a particular worldview from a particular time. It's persisted both because it's useful to its members and their magickal Traditions and because its members are very powerful. Over time power, like money, tends to become more concentrated. Powerful people seek to strip power from their enemies and either hoard it for themselves or use it to buy friends and stack decks in their favor.

Origins of the Council

The Council of Nine came into being five hundred years ago, and that should tell you a lot about it. Like most venerable institutions of the time, it's built on shaky foundations.

In the 15th century, Sh'zar the Seer, one of the Sahajiya, traveled the world, encouraging mages to come together; to speak, commune, debate, and know one another. This, as many groups of mages already knew, was the only way the mystick arts would survive in the face of the growing power, organization, and strategy of the Order of Reason. And that's an essential thing to know about the Council of Nine: it exists only in opposition to other groups. The panoply of mystics who attended the Grand Convocation in the newly created private realm of Horizon had nothing in common but their enemies.

Now—and for many centuries—the Council has advocated a few key values: excellence, diversity, respect, protection of the Sleepers, the concept of magick, and the pursuit of Ascension. They should, but don't, add 'safety in numbers.'

That's not to say that the Council hasn't transcended its origins. That's partly because any organization as old as it is generates a kind of self-sustaining mythology, but mostly because it's valuable. It's possible, and even wise, to be cynical about the Council of Nine, but they've provided an ideological rallying point, a safe haven in the form of Horizon (until recently) and built a coalition that preserved the Nine Mystick Traditions as a viable force in the Ascension War. If not for the Council, a Euthanatos would have little in common with a Hermetic, who in turn would find scant common ground with a Kha'vadi. That's the real power of the Council: it fosters a sense of unity that, in turn, contributes to mages' survival in a very real way.

At the Grand Convocation, which started in 1457 and didn't end until 1466, the Traditions' first task was to speak themselves into existence. Some attendees already knew who they were and weren't giving ground. The Akashayana had thousands of years of codified history, and the Order of Hermes had already defined and delineated its Houses. Other groups from several continents looked for kindred spirits and found them. Many schools of folk magic organized behind the witch Nightshade and formed the Verbenas, and the people of the Great Wheel politely acknowledged one another and allowed themselves to be described as the Chakravanti.

This was not a fair and equitable process. The Order of Hermes had won a great battle against the Order of Reason at the ruins of Mistridge Chantry, and they leveraged that victory. They weren't about to be broken up and shoved into other groups. They remained strong and united, and they were well-positioned to exert ample influence over the Convocation and the Council that came from it. There's a reason the Traditions use a lot of Hermetic parlance—Arete, certamen, and more—to this day.

While the powerful European mages were working the room, they shouted down, diminished, and disdained many other groups. They chose nine Traditions to reflect the nine Spheres of magick (another primarily Hermetic definition) and force-fit the attendees into nine boxes. Most egregiously, they called any will-worker who listened to the songs of earth and spirit a 'Dreamspeaker,' regardless of the differences in their beliefs and practices.

All this to say, the Council of Nine was never perfect. It was never an ideologically pure union of nine distinct groups of mages. It runs on compromises, omission—polite or otherwise—and power, and it always will.

The March of the Nine

It took nine years for the Grand Convocation and the long discussions, residencies, and politicking that followed to produce the concrete definition of the Traditions and, along with them, the First Cabal.

This assembly of Adepts was as much a PR exercise as a unit, the Council of Nine's superhero team (as anachronistic as that concept is to the 15th century). Nine mages, one from each of the newly declared Traditions and thus representing each Sphere of magick, banded together to fight the Order of Reason. Their mission was not only a show of force but a promise of potential: The Traditions, united, were stronger than the sum of their parts and capable of holding the Order of Reason at bay. And, initially, the move was successful. The Adepts fought the infernalist Tezghul the Insane and razed his stronghold of Kupala Alka. They had notable victories against the Order of Reason in Europe.

The March of the Nine lasted from 1466–1470. Four short years. It wasn't their enemies that brought them down, but betrayal from within. Heylel Teomim, the Solificati emissary and leader of the First Cabal, grew frustrated with how hard it was to get anything done—at having to stroke inflated egos, soothe hurt pride, and charm people who should have been allies or servants. Meanwhile, the Order of Reason made decisions and acted on them.

In 1470, Teomim betrayed the cabal to the Order of Reason. Three of the members died in the ambush, one (Akrites Salonikas, of the Sahajiya, then known as the Seers of Chronos and later as the Cult of Ecstasy) escaped, and the others were captured. Of the captives, the Euthanatos Cygnus Moro died under torture. Salonikas rescued the survivors, tracked down Teomim, and brought the betrayer back to Horizon for trial and execution.

By Teomim's own account, they betrayed their allies to the Order of Reason so the Traditions would focus on the enemy instead of quarreling amongst themselves. Heylel recognized early on that the Traditions could only function with a banner to unite behind and an enemy to orient themselves by.

That remains a theme for the half millennium since the Council's founding. It's strongest when it has a mission, a crusade, and an enemy.

There's a lesson there. Mages aren't necessarily given to cooperation. Put nine people with wills strong enough to bend, or sometimes break, reality in a room together and they'll have at least nine distinct ideas of what 'right,' 'good,' and 'necessary' look like—probably more. That diversity and individualism is a strength, but it can also be a source of frustration: Every policy is a compromise that takes careful negotiation and exploration, and there's still



a chance that some strong-willed wildcard will choose to ignore the decision.

Rulership by a council is in some ways deeply unnatural for mages. The Technocracy maintains a hierarchy through its collective devotion to order and control; Nephandi and Marauders barely manage to organize at all (undoubtedly to the benefit of the world as a whole). The Traditions attempt to tread the delicate line between coercion and chaos.

The Council Through History

The Council of Nine is either a prime example of a whole greater than the sum of its parts or a Ship of Theseus. Each Tradition has a Primus, the holder of their seat on the Council. The Primi aren't always the most powerful member of their Tradition but they're usually the most politically savvy, the most ambitious, or both. Naturally, the positions have changed hands numerous times over the centuries; that's to be expected, even with mages' long lifespans. What's less predictable is how the Traditions that make up the Council have changed.

The alchemists known as the Solificati suffered a schism after Heyl's betrayal. Many separated from the Traditions and renamed themselves the Children of Knowledge. Those

who stayed joined the Order of Hermes, becoming House Solificati. When they left, the Council had only eight seats filled for centuries; such is the weight and power of the institution. Its self-made myth persisted, even when reality didn't align with it. Later, the Ahl-i-Batin left, threats to their members proving far more pressing than the Council's Ascension War.

The departure of the Solificati left the Seat of Matter open, and in the mid-19th century it was filled by the Traditions' first technomancers, the Society of Ether — also specialists in the magick of Matter. The Ahl-i-Batin were eventually replaced by the Virtual Adepts, filling the Seat of Correspondence once again. Depending on who's describing it, that's either fate, reality falling into step with the will of several Primi, or a superb piece of brand management. It's technically possible that the only new candidates for inclusion happened to match the seats available; it's definitely not the most outlandish coincidence that's ever happened around powerful mages.

Apart from the will of the Primi, why does the Council of Nine have such staying power? It's not the Technocracy; there are no edicts issued from on high, and most Tradition mages wouldn't obey them anyway. The Council doesn't send out strike teams or care packages to solve the problems of Tradition mages.

For most of its history, the Council of Nine held court in an Umbral realm far from earthly troubles, and literally far away from Earth itself. In theory it dispensed justice (or at least punishment) for contraventions of its code (see **Mage 20** pp. 140–143), but in practice it had to hear about an infraction first. Mostly, the Council serves as a symbol of hope and cooperation, a sign that the idea of the Traditions means something.

This was never a universally welcome position, especially in the 20th century. Wars raged across the entire world. Millions died. The Council of Nine stayed far away from the conflict, safe in Horizon. Supposedly, they were pursuing higher goals: enlightenment, Ascension, a better reality that wouldn't be susceptible to mundane human evil. Some mages hoped for help; others expected nothing and were proven right. It's only natural that the concept of Horizon lost some of its glow. The induction of the Virtual Adepts in 1961 provided hope of change, of fresh ideas to sweep away the dusty conservatism of those in power.

The realm of Horizon, which gave its name to the concept of Horizon realms, the small pocket realities powerful mages craft where their paradigms hold sway, was created for the Grand Convocation and it almost outlived the 20th century. Horizon was a place where every Tradition paradigm was equally valid, where all forms of mystickal magic (or at least the nine officially recognized forms) could be practiced to their greatest potential. Where history could be recorded and remembered. To some, it was something to fight for.

At its height the realm of Horizon was home to 30,000 people, many Awakened but others the families, descendants, and staff of mages and almost all living in the city of Concordia. As well as the human population, Horizon sheltered bygones, mythical creatures long extinct on Earth. Throughout the Ascension War, it stood as a symbol of hope and possibility.

In some respects Horizon was best viewed from a distance. Close up, it was a small (by Earth standards) community full of strong personalities, personal agendas, and vast egos. It was insular, and most of its residents spent their time politicking, vying for advantage in matters great and small. In more practical terms, Horizon was a sanctuary. Its distance from Earth, impenetrable magical defenses, and the sheer number of powerful willworkers in the realm made it the safest place for Tradition mages in any world. It was hard to access, of course, but that was part of its appeal.

Mages know that patterns — even without an uppercase P — have power. Stories and myths can be the most powerful patterns of all. In the late 20th century, a revolutionary identifying their self as the Ascension Warrior encouraged young mages to overthrow their corrupt, negligent elders;

they leveled accusations that the elders were obsessed with the war against the Technocracy and oblivious to the real world. This 'Ascension Warrior' claimed to be Heylel Teomim.

Whether the Ascension Warrior really was Teomim returned, or a clone gestated in a Technocracy realm, Horizon's history ended with a battle between Akrites Salonikas, the only man to escape Teomim's ambush in 1470, and the being who claimed to be his former friend and betrayer.

That conflict could have been the end of the Council of Nine, but — once again, a tribute to how powerful the idea of the Council is — it only closed the loop on its first era. Horizon, its politics, and its ancient and powerful archmages were all gone. Council seats sat empty, and this time not only one or two. And yet the Council persisted, though the future of the Traditions was firmly earthbound.

Current State

More so than most aspects of **Mage**, exactly how the Council of Nine currently works is very much driven by the type of game you're playing. In some styles — low-power games focusing on local people and problems — the Council might not matter at all. Mages might not even know about them. Those who Awakened after Horizon fell might never hear about it; maybe their mentor isn't in the know, doesn't want to cry over spilt milk, or thinks Tradition hierarchies are irrelevant. Maybe the Council doesn't exist in any meaningful form.

One thing is true in most variants of the **Mage** timeline. Assuming the Council of Nine exists, it's adapting and changing. The loss of Horizon — if it happened in your continuity — hit them hard. Even if they still have their Chantry and realm, they're in a new age. The Technocracy is changing and the Disparates are organizing. Playing politics in the safety of their private dimension isn't an option anymore. Survival requires relevance, and relevance requires taking an active role in the world and being visible (to other Tradition magi; we're not talking about vulgar, disruptive acts of magick... unless that's your jam). If you're going to use the Council of Nine, get them up off their collective ass and use them to drive big changes in your setting.

Different members of the Council have different priorities. A newly energized Council might focus on outreach work forging connections with the Disparate Alliance and other factions. That won't be easy. The Council must demonstrate its utility, which might lead to Tradition mages being dispatched to assist with other groups' problems. The Council has plenty of past transgressions and errors to atone for, too. This work might be less about performing favors and more about paying debts. For example, the Council lost the

Ahl-i-Batin's support by ignoring their concerns and needs; can it win them back with support now?

Alternatively, the Council might well decide it needs a new enemy to once again give it purpose and prove its value. That's probably the Technocracy, which has the potential to fracture the Traditions, although some Tradition mages would question whether the Technocracy is the most pressing problem. Despite its own internal problems, however, the Technocracy will always be more than a match for any Tradition show of force. That's why they're such a useful enemy for the Council.

If you don't want history to repeat itself, the Council might see the Disparate Alliance as the more pressing threat. A strong alliance of mystic mages who don't recognize the Traditions' centrality and dominance undermines newly Awakened mages' willingness to support the Tradition cause by default. The more progressive the Council is, the more likely they are to reach out to the Disparates rather than oppose them, but that could easily lead to the Traditions, as a distinct faction, dissolving. Force of habit is the only reason this arbitrary group of nine magical groups operate as a discrete set. Some Traditions, like the Kha'vadi, already recognize this truth and feel more kinship with groups outside the Traditions than within them.

In general, it looks like a post-Horizon Council of Nine will be composed of younger and more progressive mages but that doesn't mean there's no pushback. There are still old conservatives and hardline Ascension warriors out there. There might still be people who think the Ascension Warrior was right. If the Council is more progressive, and that's what your players want, make sure it's not easy for the next generation to steer the ship.

The Sphinx (*Mage 20*, pp. 143–144) is a powerful dramatic device to challenge protagonists with a progressive agenda. The Sphinx is widely assumed to be an Oracle, a collection of Archmages, or the Horizon Council. This doesn't have to be true to be a strong plotline. The Sphinx's messages are a rallying cry for mages who want a return to the old days, and old ways, of the Council. Characters who oppose it find natural allies in the Technocratic Panopticon (*Mage 20*, p. 175).

The Council might be a problem for your player characters. Most mages are used to going their entire lives without thinking about 'Tradition leadership,' let alone interacting with it. Some Adepts and even Masters – who might be the characters' patrons, mentors, or rivals – won't appreciate orders from above. But the Council might decide it needs to show its power. This could lead to conflicts within a Tradition or between Traditions, and those have a way of spiraling. A Council determined to show its dominance makes a good antagonist and a truly great obstacle.

In a chronicle featuring a mix of Tradition mages, Orphans, Disparates, and Technocrats, the Council of Nine's bid for relevance takes on a more sinister note. For Orphans and Disparates, it's a bid to assert unearned authority over them. For Technocrats, it's likely that the Council will conclude it needs its old enemy more than a new ally and fan the flames of that conflict. To some extent that depends on which Traditions have the most influence (see *Conflicts Within* below), but the divisions between progressives and conservatives offer a great opportunity for Technocrats or Disparates to manipulate or destabilize the Council of Nine – an excellent chronicle storyline, either as the focus or a parallel, secondary plotline.

Even if you're playing a 'street level' game where Tradition politics are way outside the protagonists' concerns, the actions of powerful mages should still trickle down. Nodes and Chantries, however small, are unlikely to escape some kind of diplomatic overture. Maybe the protagonists' corner of the setting is exactly the place for someone out of favor with the Council to hide from their enemies. Or local antagonists' strategies and goals might be colored by what 'the Traditions,' who they wrongly perceive to be a unified faction, are doing.

There are rich narrative pickings in storylines where the Council are close instead of distant. Some Council seats are empty; others are held by mages with a tenuous grasp, whose Traditions are changing around them. A chronicle could revolve around characters identifying where their needs and agenda depart from the Council's and putting in place candidates who represent them better. They might even end up as Primi themselves. They might set out to rebuild Horizon. Or they might decide the entire institution is rotten and outdated and work to bring it down.

Like any political storyline, the key to running satisfying and relatable Council plots is making the politics matter. Decisions made by the Council must affect the player characters' world in a meaningful way. A power play could mean an important resource (a Wonder, Chantry, or Node) changes hands, or an antagonist gets stronger or weaker. An alliance or rivalry higher up the chain could mean a local ally suddenly can't be trusted. It could also open up the chance of a relationship with someone who previously had no reason to work with the characters. The hubris of political ambition could drive a powerful mage into Quiet, affecting everyone around them. At its most blatant and dangerous, a powerful and proactive Council could provoke a violent reaction from Technocrats, the Fallen, or even other supernatural creatures.

Conflicts Within

Every Primus on the Council has an agenda, and every Tradition has issues of their own. Each of them is untangling themselves from their past and looking to the

future. Without Horizon, old orthodoxies crumble and new viewpoints emerge.

The Akashayana benefit from the stable leadership of Hyeonmyeong Sunim (or Nu Ying, see p. XX). They continue their long-term plans of popularizing East Asian philosophies and practices, but they're also taking an interest in the Digital Web. Whether that turns into a beautiful alliance with the Virtual Adepts or a turf war remains to be seen.

The Celestial Chorus is distracted. Its numbers are shrinking, and a movement to excise any groups who don't align with the current agenda of community building and protecting Sleeper flocks is only hastening the disintegration. The Chorus is accustomed to being strong and self-sustaining, but that may be in jeopardy.

The Cult of Ecstasy, long dismissed as deadheads and club kids, are reclaiming their ancient name: Sahajiya. It was a Sahajiya mage who brought the Traditions together for the Grand Convocation, and another who ended the Ascension Warrior's assault on the Traditions. It's not unthinkable that the Sahajiya plan on stepping forward and taking a more active role in guiding the Traditions into this new age, and a Council shaped by the Sahajiya would look very different to the conservative, complacent organization that came before.

The Kha'vadi are also making moves. Depending on your continuity, they're either pulling away from the Council — because they have issues of their own to confront and no interest in holding the hands of an organization that's done very little for them — or becoming more determined to be heard. In the former case, the Council might not find itself with an empty chair again, but the Kha'vadi's disaffection is clear, and it's hard to make a case for the continuing validity of a ruling Council when an entire group of mages is apathetic. Alternatively, if they're more assertive, the Kha'vadi could be a powerful progressive force, insisting that the Council confronts its biases.

The Verbena, too, are changing. They, like the Sahajiya, are grappling with gender essentialism. The witches have also chosen to confront their history of elevating Celtic and Euro-paganism at the expense of other traditions of folk magic. Younger mages, as well as some older ones who had no interest in the previous iteration of the Council, come forward to lead the Verbena through these issues and, in turn, help guide other Traditions through their own post-Horizon transformations. And yet, the Verbena have reason to believe their own First Cabal member, Eloine, is still out there. If they're right, and if Eloine is at all interested in the organization she served and helped to grow, the Verbena might find a strong counterweight to their progressive swing.

Between the Sahajiya and the Kha'vadi, and the Verbena's willingness to listen to them, the Council is getting

a hard shove away from its Euro- and US-centric roots into a global organization with global concerns.

Just as the Sahajiya and Kha'vadi step forward, the Order of Hermes, once the backbone of the Council, is taking steps to distance itself from its history. The Order is reckoning with how to treat its 'minor' Houses and how to acknowledge but transcend its history of privilege and hardline stance in the Ascension War. A shift in the Order's position leaves remaining conservatives on the Council adrift without a reliable anchor.

The Society of Ether have always teetered between madness and the Fall, with brazen departures from Sleeper science on one side and power trips and doomsday devices on the other. That hasn't changed, but they've added new projects to their to-do list. Wrestling with a history of imperialism and a serious lack of diversity takes time away from their agenda of pushing back against Consensus and 're-Wondering' the world. The Society, as always, has big plans. It needs to execute some of them.

The Virtual Adepts are finally old enough to have their first schism and their first generation of crusty old folk who don't understand the new generation. They're fracturing into diehard Digital Web fans and the new Mercurial Elite, who have a more abstract set of beliefs. Who holds the Council seat depends on the timeline (and whether the Avatar Storm happened), but whoever's technically in charge, the Old Guard still hold a lot of cards, and the relationship between the two halves of the Tradition is rocky. Who ends up in charge could have a major impact on the nature of the Council: It needs the Adepts more than ever, for their ability to connect mages in a post-Horizon world, so the Council needs to keep them happy.

Senex of the Euthanatoi — remarkably unchanging, for a Tradition that prides itself on the natural order of death and change, the old making way for the young — sees the Traditions as standing on the brink of change. Nobody knows quite what the Old Man is planning, as is Senex's preference.

There's a real chance that with so many new factions and approaches emerging, the Council of Nine might shake itself apart: Old ties are unraveling, and it remains to be seen whether circumstances will call for the creating of new ones.

The Council and Other Factions

The Council's relationships with other factions are complex, at best.

The simplest relationship is with the Nephandi. It's generally agreed there's no common ground to be found with the Nephandi. They're warped perversions of everything a mage — hell, everything a human being — should be. And

Future Fates: Nothing's Ever Simple

Whatever variant of the timeline your group's playing with, this section is useful. If there's any kind of Tradition leadership in your continuity, they'll face the same problems: struggles over how to work with the Technocracy, disinterest and distrust from the Disparate Alliance, and — without centuries of established doctrine — maybe even more debate over how to deal with the Fallen.

yet, after the Euthanatoi cleaned house and erased the corrupted House of Helekar from existence, the archmage Senex, of the Madzimbabwe sect of the Euthanatoi, took on one of the fallen Chantry's students as his own apprentice. He's now the Euthanatoi's Council member, and that young woman, Theora Hetirck, is now his Herald.

And so, there's room for argument even there. Maybe the Fallen can be redeemed, or maybe it's okay if they can't as long as their usefulness outweighs their threat. Both lines of thinking are dangerous, and either one could split the Council at any time. Worse, the precedent could lead to more rescues and alliances, and sow seeds that will bloom into a fresh crop of corruption amongst the Traditions.

The Council exists to oppose the Technocracy. And yet, depending on whom one asks, the Ascension War is either over or fundamentally different now. Sometimes the Technocracy are the best, or only, allies a Tradition mage has. And that presents a huge philosophical problem for the Council: if not the enemies of the Technocracy, who are they, when they've always defined themselves by their opposition? Why should a Tradition technomancer continue to prioritize bonds with magical sects they don't understand over connections to other technomancers? Heylel Teomim knew within twenty years of the Council's founding that it needed an enemy, or it would disintegrate. That hasn't changed.

The Council has nothing to gain by erasing the old battle lines, but if they don't, they risk irrelevance. For an organization that's frequently accused of being out of touch and out of step with modern mages, that's a serious danger. An official missive on the Traditions' relationship with the Technocracy is almost certainly coming, but only when the Council can no longer avoid it.

The Council accepting an alliance with the Technocracy is a little like a mom and pop store welcoming a megacorporation to town. The Technocracy is big, organized, and efficient, and if the Council opens the gates to them, it could find itself forever trapped in the Technocracy's shadow. Worse, the Traditions could end up devoured and digested, their ideals becoming a palatable, fast food version that make it easy for Technocrats and Traditions

to work together. And working together means doing the Technocracy's work. They're the ones with the money, guns, stability, and pension plans.

The Council's most complex relationship of all is with the Disparates, or Crafts. To outsiders, the Crafts look like natural allies for the Traditions. Most Technocrats, for example, don't care much about the difference between a Knight Templar and a Celestial Chorister. One god-bothering reality deviant looks a lot like another. That simplistic assessment glosses over centuries of hurt feelings and disrespect from the Council of Nine toward the Disparates.

The way the Council, and therefore most Tradition mages, tell the story of the Grand Convocation, there was a seat at the table for everyone. When has reality ever been that simple? Sh'zar never reached some groups and may not even have known about them. Some of those he did reach chose not to come; the Order of Reason, after all, was a largely European threat that would later spread to the new world with wave after wave of European colonization. Some of those who did attend were alienated by European mages' insistence on grouping together dozens of different practices and philosophies under the umbrella of 'Dreamspeakers' or co-opting them into other groups that had little in common but shared regional origins.

The mages who became the Traditions, and the Council, set their agenda and largely ignored groups who didn't align with it. The Council of Nine can't reasonably claim to represent all mystics. It might not even represent the majority of them: There are dozens of Crafts, ranging in size from dozens of members to hundreds or even more. The Disparate Alliance is growing in numbers and influence, and the Council hasn't yet reacted. Time will tell whether the Council will treat the Disparates with paternalistic condescension (which the Disparate Alliance won't appreciate), see them as competition or a threat, or learn to work with them as equals and allies.

The Council's attention has always been on Europe and America. This narrow focus pushed away the Ahli-Batin, who withdrew from the Council in the mid-20th century to look after their own interests: maintaining the Web of Faith and addressing Technocratic incursions into the Middle East.

Their needs didn't align with the Council's agenda, and rather than adapt and support, the Council lost them and left the seat of Correspondence open until the mid-20th century. To continue to thrive in their second millennium, the Council must learn and adapt and consider giving more than it takes.

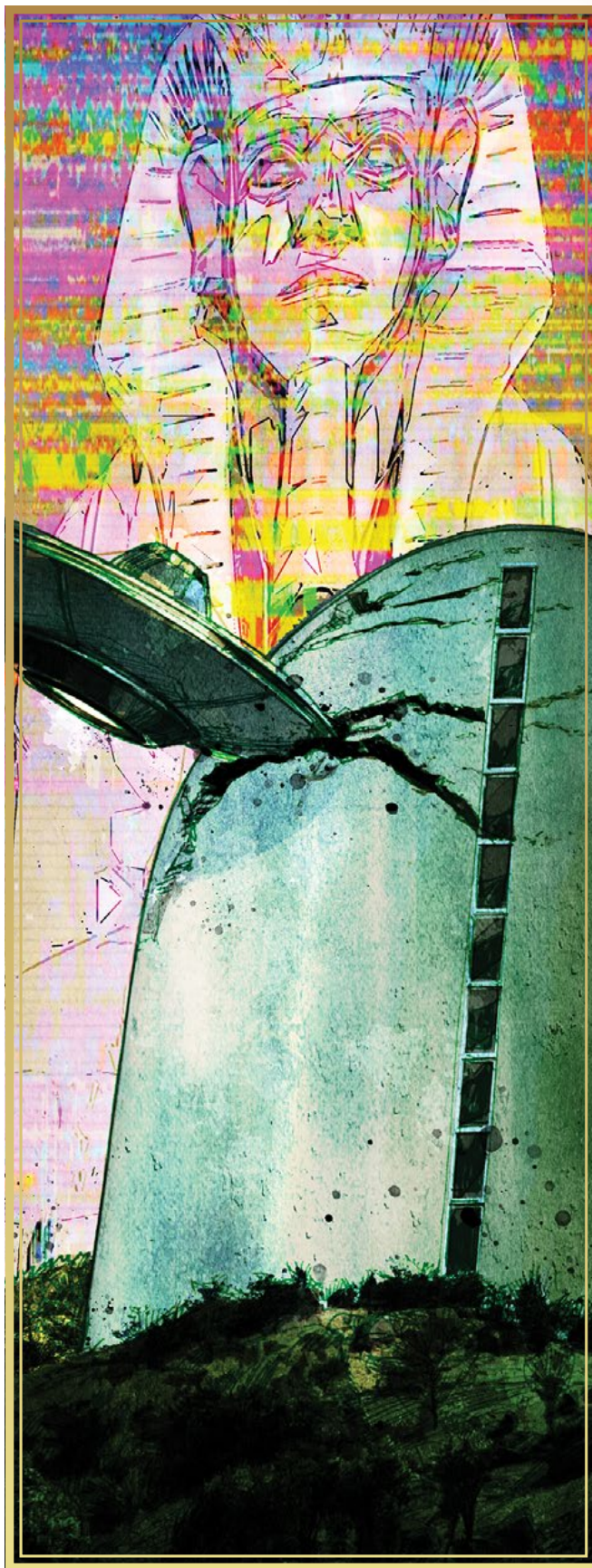
Time will tell, too, whether the Disparates are interested in working with the Council in any way. Historically, the Council have been inflexible: They advance their own priorities, and only theirs. The Disparates simply don't share their agenda. Even if the Council's attitude changes, the Disparates may have no interest in finding out.

Future Fates

So far, this chapter presented the most probable situation and direction for the Council of Nine, based on a couple of keystone events. But there's no canon in **Mage 20**, and there are many weirder ways the wavefronts of probability could collapse together.

To begin with, why stop at one Council of Nine Mystick Traditions? Once Horizon is gone, and the whole infrastructure of the Traditions with it, by what authority do newcomers to the Council Seats take up those posts? What makes a new Council official? It's not as though mages are holding global elections. Any claim to authority can only mean some, maybe many, powerful people support a set of candidates. It follows that any other group can make an equally good claim. 14th century Europe had three simultaneous popes, and Tradition mages are a lot more fervently opposed to assumed authority than devout Christians. If that happens, chaos abounds, and the whole concept of the Traditions is weaker for the conflict. One way for a Council of Nine to achieve primacy and recognition would be to make serious strides in defeating an enemy. It might have to find one first; if Technocrats and Disparates don't work, there's always the option of aliens, fae, or a third Massassa War.

If Horizon wasn't destroyed, or even attacked, the Council continues to be a largely irrelevant, isolationist institution. As science, faith, and mysticism develop and recombine in new ways around the world and across generations of Sleepers, it's probably even more irrelevant. It might be time for planned obsolescence. A chronicle could see the Council put its affairs in order, settle some debts, and disband. This would likely follow one or more Traditions formally departing from the Council, and there would be groups within the Council who refused to move on quietly, deciding to go out in a blaze of glory rather than live to watch themselves become unimportant.





AKASHIC BROTHERHOOD (The Akashayana)

*It takes days of practice to extinguish a candle fifty feet away
with the wind from a punch. It takes years to relight it the same way.
Come, practice with me.*

— Hyeonmyeong Sunim

Over 3,000 years, the Akashayana's gone by many names, each translated into other languages, creating dozens of terms. The Meru-Ai, Akashi, Akashic Brotherhood – all reflections of their identity: an eternal lineage of mages seeking Ascension through enlightenment, with many striving to aid the rest of the world on this path.

What About Battering Ram?

The more fanciful names for Akashics in previous books made the names easier to understand for some players, but also exoticized the characters unnecessarily. **Lore of the Traditions** avoids that practice for the same reason that books written by Westerners do not refer to “Samuel Haight” as “Name of God from Atop the Hill.” This book also updates some spellings to their correct, modern transliterations. To avoid confusion with the Akashayana's mix of monastic, birth names, and titles, names with family names use given name first presentation herein.

Similarly, they used older transliterations for Asian languages, including a mix of Chinese languages. Most Chinese words used in **Lore of the Traditions** use Mandarin's pinyin transliteration, reflecting the fact that more Akashi speak Mandarin than any other Chinese language. Gendered terms, such as sidai and sihing, also benefit from updates. See Akashi and Gender (p. XX) for more on this.

Overview

With storied members from hundreds of different ethnicities, the Akashayana reflects the diversity of Asia. That's not to say that there aren't members of non-Asian descent, but the Tradition's three millennia of history has certainly skewed demographics. Because of the visible nature of the Vajrapani, many see the Akashi as warrior monks, but in truth there are six pai (or sects):

- **Jnani:** Wise sages, shamans, and hermits, wandering the world in search of clarity.
- **Kannagara:** Disciplined monks seeking Ascension through self-mastery.
- **Li-Hai:** Utilitarians who assist the world in reaching enlightenment through practical love.

Glossary

Akasha: The fifth element in classical Buddhism and Hinduism (after earth, water, fire, and air) from which the Akashayana take their name.

Akashi: 1. The name of the Akashayana during the Himalayan Wars. 2. One or more members of the Akashayana.

Akashic: 1. The adjective form for Akashayana 2. A member of the Akashayana.

Akashic Brotherhood: A nickname for the Akashayana, which has largely fallen out of use.

Akashic Record: A repository of knowledge of all events, ideas, and thoughts that have occurred or will occur. For more, see p. XX.

This reference should Point to The Akashic Record: Guide to Draladharmā.

Bodhimandala: A Chantry. Also referred to as an Akhara, Dōjō, Dojang, Wǔguǎn, and other regionally appropriate names.

Draladharmā: A guiding principle of the Akashayana, the understanding that there are no enemies, only morally correct actions. Sometimes abbreviated as Drarma or simply Dharma. For more, see p. XX.

This ref should point to Draladharmā: the power of the universe

Eternal name: The name attached to one's Avatar, which many reincarnated Akashi use. For more, see p. XX.

This ref should point to the sidebar Eternal names

Jade Robes: Shì-Rén members

Jiān ài: "Equal love" — the core Lì-Hài principle.

Kōhai: 1. Any Akashi junior to the speaker, regardless of gender. 2. An informal student role between two Akashi (c.f. sempai).

Lùkǒu: 1. "Intersection," the karmic bond that connects two (or more) Avatars. 2. People with the bond.

Pai: Sects of the Akashayana.

Phoenix Robes: Kannagara members.

Scales of the Dragon: Vajrapani members.

Sān Zhàn: "The Three Battles," representing the cosmic balance between the Metaphysic Trinity, more specifically Dragon (Entropy), Phoenix (Stasis), and Tiger (Dynamism). Also transliterated as Trican, Sanchin, and Sam Chiéng.

Sempai: 1. Any Akashi senior to the speaker, regardless of gender. 2. An informal teaching role between two Akashi (c.f. kōhai).

Shīfù: A teacher and master of a discipline. Also pronounced as sifu in Cantonese. Sensei, seonsaeng, guru, and other equivalent terms in other Asian languages also see use. Generally, each Bodhimandala has a single Shīfù.

Sidai: 1. A junior male Akashi, somewhat phased out in favor of kōhai. 2. An Akashi in their apprentice period in the Kannagara before choosing their sect.

Sihing: A senior male Akashi, somewhat phased out in favor of sempai.

- **Shi-Rén:** Bureaucratic legalists who improve the world through manipulating the masses.
- **Vajrapani:** Martial monks striving to clarify minds through physical effort.
- **Wūlóng:** A recently joined and declining sect who see themselves as the mortal representatives of Heaven.

Recruiters, often Kannagara or Vajrapani, search the world for prospective members. This effort is possible largely because of their strong influence on Eastern religions, with all major Eastern religious institutions and most martial arts associations having at least one Akashi among their leadership. Some members reincarnate into new bodies. Once recruiters identify these members by their Avatar,

they either wait for the member to Awaken on their own time or work to trigger the Awakening.

Once Awakened members agree to join the Akashayana, they temporarily join the Kannagara, learning the Akashayana's history and philosophies. This sidai period typically lasts a year, although ambition and curiosity can reduce that to mere months — or increase it to several years. After apprenticing, Akashi are free to train with whichever pai they'd like to learn more from. Most elect to join a pai, with a sempai taking a mentor role, personally handling the member's education. Eventually, skilled, powerful, and wise members may rise to become sempai or even Shifū becoming responsible for the care and growth of their Bodhimandala.

History

Akashic history stretches back before written records, with their earliest history preserved in oral traditions and the echoes of memories in Avatars of reincarnated members.

The Third Age

The earliest Akashi were mountain people residing in a Realm: Meru. Though most Akashi now believe that these people were a group of mages and their Sleepwalker families from Earth, oral traditions say that they were the first humans, created by primordial forces of the Karmic Wheel. Regardless of origin, the Meru-Ai thrived, learning from the Sān Zhàn, the Celestine Dragon, Phoenix, and Tiger.

Through the Dragon, they learned humility, understanding no matter how hard they studied and practiced, no matter how long they lived to perfect their magic, there would always be forces beyond their power

and comprehension. This drove the Meru-Ai to eschew individualism in favor of helping others, knowing that each individual success is irrelevant before the cosmic forces, but helping others increases the overall good in the universe.

The Phoenix taught them that nothing, not even death, is forever. The Meru-Ai understood that Avatars are more than a portion of a mage, capable of outlasting their mortal bodies and reappearing in new physical forms. This reincarnation means that the Akashi do not have a handful of voices echoing throughout time, but many voices, learning from their pasts without ignoring the knowledge of the younger generations.

From the Tiger, they gained an understanding of creation, realizing that Life is inexhaustible; it must be, or plants and animals could not exist. Every force of destruction or entropy can be overcome, even if only temporarily.

Lùkōu: Intersecting Souls

Many Akashic mages have Avatars that seek new bodies when the mage dies. Through reincarnation, traditions and practices are handed from generation to generation, even if a disaster destroys an entire Chantry. Because of this cyclical process, many Akashi form bonds that last eternally. These eternal relationships are known as lùkōu — intersections. Akashic lùkōu frequently seek each other, persistent thoughts and resurfacing memories drawing them together. Lùkōu may involve two or more Avatars, though it's rare for more than two mages to share such bonds.

Frequently, lùkōu bonds mean that a kōhai and sempai (or even a Shifū) will take turns teaching each other over centuries. Sometimes, the bonds are romantic, with two (or more) mages seeking each other out, regardless of which gender their eternal companion may take.

Unfortunately, those violently slain can also form lùkōu, carrying trauma over multiple lifetimes. The violence of Himalayan Wars created dozens of lùkōu among the Akashi and Thanatoi, forcing them into cycles of deaths.

Akashi and Gender

The term “Akashic Brotherhood” has never accurately reflected the gender diversity of the Akashayana. Although early Vajrapani bands were originally composed of all men, reincarnation changed that almost immediately. Since roughly half of the Akashayana are reincarnations, most Akashi have a loose relationship with gender.

These Akashi carry memories of past lives with bodies different from their current form. Many experience gender dysphoria while they’re younger, their self-image and bodies clashing within the battleground of the mind. Dysphoric Akashi learn techniques to guide themselves to either accept their current body — a temporary vessel with its own unique characteristics — or transition, presenting themselves in a way that celebrates their eternal self. Unsurprisingly, the Akashayana have a higher-than-average number of transgender members, especially non-binary people, who may view their gender as something between the two dominant genders or see themselves as not having a gender at all (agender).

Moreover, the Meru-Ai believed that this meant it was their duty to do so. Though accomplishing this was simple enough within the Celestine Realm of Meru, they knew that they were not alone in the cosmos.

To ensure that they acted correctly on other worlds, they created techniques to glimpse behind the fabric of reality, allowing each of them to view the Akashic Record. With the lessons of the Sān Zhàn, the Meru-Ai realized their moral duty: to leave Mt. Meru, preventing suffering where they could.

The Fourth Age

The Akashi (not yet Akashayana) arrived on Earth and spread throughout much of what would become India and China, particularly the Garuda Valley, near what is now Tibet. Oral records disagree on when this happened, with accounts ranging from 3,000 to 2,000 BCE. Most Akashi believe the dates are accurate, indicating groups arriving at different points of history, thanks to difficulties traveling through time and space.

Soon after arrival, the Akashi exchanged knowledge and philosophies with their neighbors. They quickly encountered the Thanatoic cults and formed alliances to help the Sleepers.

The Himalayan Wars

During a 900 BCE plague outbreak in the Ganges Valley, the Akashi and Thanatoic cults joined forces to save Sleepers. Among the Akashics was Yānhǔ, who discovered his Dacoit counterpart Ranjit killing plague victims. Though the Thanatoic healer had meant to end their suffering and to prevent the disease’s spread, Yānhǔ saw it as murder and lashed out with a single blow, killing the teen.

Had the Thanatoi simply killed Yānhǔ, history might have taken a different turn, but they released him to his fellow Akashi, where he speculated Ranjit’s true motive: to kill reincarnated Akashi before they Awakened. After an uneasy year, the Jnani urged General Ng to not only attack the Dacoit but to wage war on all Thanatoic cults.

By nightfall, both the Akashics and the Thanatoic cults united against their common enemies. Decades into the fighting, Kannagara monks discovered that some reincarnated Akashics and Thanatoi developed lùkǒu bonds, seeking out their previous lives’ killers. Over two thousand years later, some of these violently entwined souls still exist.

Over the course of the bloody conflict, the Akashi paid less and less attention to the Akashic Record, believing they understood the general principles of dharma and no longer needed to consult the cosmos. Thanatoic and Akashic diplomats wrote peace treaties over the centuries that followed. None held, until the Akashics’ defeat at the hands of the Iron Avatar in 354 BCE.

Decline of Dogma

In peace that followed nearly a millennium of fighting, the Akashi humbled themselves, rebranding themselves as the Akashayana, the vehicle of Akasha. They sought every path to enlightenment. Thanks to the Hundred Schools of Thought boom in philosophy at the time, they had plenty of choices. Though the influx of ideologies dismayed the elders, it proved pivotal. In 351 BCE, barely after the end of the Himalayan Wars, dozens of Vajrapani left their violent lives to become Sleeper nobility, secretly joining the Zhōu Dynasty.

Shì-Rén

As these combat veterans transitioned into nobility, they learned the stroke of a pen could change more lives than days of wars. They recognized the wide-reaching consequences and sought to encourage benevolence through bureaucracy. Though the Zhōu didn't survive the Warring States Period, this sect of the Akashayana would, branding themselves as scholars, Shì-Rén.

Lì-Hài

Shortly afterward, another sect rose, rejecting the violence of the Vajrapani and passivity of the Kannagara. Through the teachings of the Sleeper philosopher Mòzǐ, they saw weighing the consequences of actions as essential to determining morality and strove to love all people. The Kannagara viewed this as fanciful daydreaming, as they had derived a code of ethics from the Akashic Record centuries ago. The rebels proved their commitment by fasting outside the Kannagara stronghold at Mount Emei, burning a book of Kannagara philosophy each day. After 108 days, the elders finally consulted the Akashic Record. Upon learning that many of their recent actions were not as virtuous as they thought, they returned to regularly consulting the Record and recognized the pai as the pros and cons — Lì-Hài — ensuring that Akashic hubris never interferes with righteousness.

Rise of Do

In 464 CE, Bodhidharma, a mortal Chán Buddhist, brought his flavor of Buddhism to China. In addition to teaching dhyana—meditative mental training—he instituted a rigorous physical fitness regimen at the Shaolin Temple. This combination of internal and external practices became the kung fu techniques the temple is famous for. Both the Vajrapani and Kannagara flocked to the temple to learn. By 550, most senior monks of the Shaolin Temple were Akashi. By 590, the Akashayana had influence over most Buddhist and Taoist monasteries.

Kamikaze War

In 1206, Genghis Khan seized most of northern China, sending the Akashayana into a frenzy, unsure of how or whether to fight the Mongol invaders. Though many sought to defeat the Mongols, the Shì-Rén saw to exploit the rapid expansion. Indecision paralyzed the Akashayana, and they failed at both goals.

By 1274, Genghis Khan's grandson, Kublai Khan, sent a fleet of hundreds of ships and tens of thousands of soldiers to Japan to complete the Mongol conquest. Over a hundred Chinese Kannagara went with the Mongols, seeking to spread the dharma of mainstream Akashayana. Instead, they faced the Japanese Vajrapani and Jnani who sent a kamikaze — a

divine wind — to batter the Mongols' fleet, killing 13,000, including many of the Kannagara. Seven years later, the Mongols and their Kannagara advisors returned with 4,400 ships and 140,000 soldiers. Unfortunately for them, the Vajrapani had spent the intervening years perfecting their kamikaze spell. Their hurricane obliterated the armada, and the Japanese samurai killed the few Mongols that made it to shore.

Within a hundred years, the Akashayana had repaired internal relations, accepting each regional group's value. Although a certain amount of nationalism still existed, most saw past borders, seeing rulers and nations as tools to aid the people. In 1438, Akashayana and Chakravanti cabals reluctantly joined forces and destroyed a Dalou'laoshi war band, marking the first time the two forces had worked together in over 2,500 years. The alliance wouldn't last, with lùkǒu on both sides eventually exploding into violence, but it did remind the groups of the value of cooperation with magickal allies.

Grand Convocation

Two decades later, archmages of some of the world's most powerful orders and their representatives began creating the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions. After another decade of negotiations, the Traditions signed the Resolutions of Intent in 1455. Xiǎofēng Qiū represented the Akashayana in the March of the Nine, along with the Primus Jin Wu, who filled the Seat of Mind. Qiū's fame did not last long; Heylel Teomim betrayed the Council to the Order of Reason and killed half of the Nine, including her, in 1470.

The Fifth Age

Though the Jnani foresaw the destruction of the Ming Dynasty and rise of the Qīng in 1644, the Akashi could not effectively steer the Qīng, due to opposition from both the Wūlóng and the Elemental Dragons, with each group fighting for political control of East Asia. While the three groups fought each other, a fourth faction entered the fray: the Order of Reason.

The Order and their Sleeper counterparts browbeat countries into submission, infamously negotiating treaties with a fleet of cannons pointed at the Qīng diplomats in the mid-1800s. They soon seeded ideas for rapid Westernization of Asia, sparking cultural revolutions across the continent. Although invasions of the West ended the conflict between the Wūlóng and the Akashayana, it also joined the Order and the Elemental Dragons, the two groups eventually forming the Technocratic Union. For more on this period see pp. XX-XX and XX-XX in **Victorian Mage**.

Although the rise and fall of the Empire of Japan changed much for the Sleepers of Asia, it did little for the

Future Fates: War in Heaven

In many chronicles, the loss of Doissetep, Concordia, and the mages within led to the Traditions losing the Ascension War to the Technocracy.

But not all worlds are the same. There are other threads of fate to follow:

- **Hyeonmyeong survived:** Through cleverness and violence, the Tradition mages defeated the Ascension Warrior. Though their victory was not without a human cost, Concordia survived to serve as base of operations to fight the Traditions' enemies. Physically blinded during the battle, Hyeonmyeong has since adjusted to his new life. Although he cannot see with his eyes, his mind is as sharp as ever.
- **Hyeonmyeong died:** He has reincarnated as a Korean-American trans man from Oakland, California, who transitioned and Awakened in 2009. In this form, he has significantly reduced power, as he is barely out of his sidai apprenticeship. Nu Ying represents the Akashayana at the New Horizon Council.
- **Hyeonmyeong is missing:** Hyeonmyeong's fate remains unknown to the Akashayana, but the Jnani have confirmed that he has not yet reincarnated, giving the Tradition hope. Nu Ying leads the Akashayana both politically and in their efforts to find Hyeonmyeong and any others missing after the War in Heaven.
- **The Ascension Warrior never attacked:** Perhaps the Traditions successfully hid the Realm from their foes or tricked them into attacking someone else. Or maybe the Ascension Warrior never existed in the first place. Regardless, the Akashayana never faced this setback, allowing them to fight in the Ascension War at full strength.

mages working behind the scenes. Technocrats and Tradition mages worked on all sides of the conflicts of the 20th century. When Akashi joined the Chinese Communist Party to help their neighbors, they weren't the least surprised to see that the Technocracy had already infiltrated the organization.

For most of the 20th century, the Traditions struggled with the Technocracy for ideological control of the world, and Asia was no exception. The Technocracy pushed people toward nationalism, disrupting the Akashayana's ability to unify them through shared cultural practices. At the same time, the Union pressured the nations of Asia to adopt a

more Western view of science and technology. As the people began turning toward technologies, the Akashayana and Wūlóng finally managed to outmaneuver their adversary by tying the idea of tradition and culture to nationalism, using the Technocracy's tool against them.

That was their last great victory before the Avatar Storm and War in Heaven destroyed everything. In 1998, the Ascension Warrior invaded Concordia, destroying it along with the Akashayana Primus Hyeonmyeong Sunim. The New Horizon Council formed, with Nu Ying coming out of retirement to fill the Akashayana's seat.



Current Events



In 1999, the Avatar Storm destroyed the Wūlóng's access to Heaven, forcing them to fully commit to the tentative alliance they'd previously formed with the Akashayana. Suddenly weak for the first time in their history, many of the Wūlóng took a closer look at the Akashic principles, with many officially joining the Akashayana.

Jnani: Wanderers

Hermits and wanderers, the Jnani were one of the original three Akashic sects. They believe that bodies, minds, and spirits are essentially identical to the Tapestry, thus Spirit magic is done with the understanding that it changes the caster as much as it does the spiritual world. This understanding of Spirit leads many Jnani to contemplate

new philosophies and practices, making them the most curious of all Akashi, even above the Li-Hài.

With the proliferation of internet technologies, hermits seeking wisdom from others no longer rely solely on spirits, word of mouth, or instincts. These days, many Jnani are online, seeking new sources of wisdom even as fellow travelers seek them in return. Though this puts them in harm's way, few dare target the Jnani, thanks to their spiritual connections and prognostication skill.

Ishiko Sensei is the current leader of the Jnani. Although the Jnani seem totally disorganized to outsiders, Ishiko personally trained nearly half of all the current Jnani, giving the master a personal connection to each of their students. This allows them to direct their kōhai in subtle ways, gently steering the wanderers.

Factions and the Akashayana

As detailed below, there are shifts within the internal structures of the Akashayana which alter some of the power dynamics and compositions of their Factions. Storytellers may adjust these shifts to account for the Future Fates at play in their chronicle. As always, the Storyteller may shift these changes further to suit the style of gameplay they wish to explore.

Kannagara: Monks

The Phoenix Robes are the oldest of the three original pai, taking their nickname from the saffron monk robes common among their order. Because the Kannagara train every Akashi, they remain the most influential sect, shaping the ever-evolving understanding of Draladharma, Dō, and the Akashic Record. The Kannagara often see themselves as guides, responsible for delving into the Akashic Record and producing written accounts that they can share with others, to inform people of their actions' karmic consequences.

Most of the Phoenix Robes are ascetic monks, living simple, monastic lives. Although they reject fleeting pleasures, they're far from boring. Most Kannagara have interesting hobbies, especially ones that lend themselves to meditative trances, such as music, dancing, martial arts kata, art, and gardening. Some of the most interesting paintings come from Kannagara monks, although few monks keep their artwork to prevent attachment.

Shīfū Konchok Choedron leads the Kannagara. Although the events of the War in Heaven (p. XX) were over two decades ago, she still tasks monks with examining the Akashic Record for clues as to what really happened and why.

Lì-Hài: Utilitarians

The Sleeper philosopher Mòzǐ's idea of *jiān ài* — universal love — resonated with battle-weary warriors and monks who felt they needed to do more with their lives. Eschewing strict rules for utilitarian ideals and a focus on consequentialism, many see the Lì-Hài as the Akashayana's rebels. Though that reputation is well-deserved, they're not quite the iconoclasts that they're painted out to be; the Lì-Hài incorporate traditional elements into their practices, but only after the elements prove beneficial to humanity. Several groups of Lì-Hài are devoted to internet research, examining the strange *mélange* of ideas for potential. The Lì-Hài have close partnerships with the other pai, acting as a spiritual research and development unit.

The democratically elected head of the Lì-Hài is Thay Cô Một Hơi Thở (or Shīfū Một Hơi Thở) who encourages considering global ramification of actions. Một Hơi Thở is quietly talking to the Virtual Adepts about destroying several international conglomerates to combat climate change and redistribute wealth throughout the planet.

Shì-Rén: Bureaucrats

Strict adherents to hierarchy and bureaucratic process, the Shì-Rén were born out of the shift toward legalism in China. The Shì-Rén see themselves as international leaders responsible for shaping culture toward a more ethical and virtuous path. What ethics and virtue means to the Shi-

Rén shift each time their Shīfū appoints their successor, allowing the pai to adapt over time, albeit slowly. Over the past few decades, they've spread yoga, karate, kung fu, and other physical practices to condition the bodies of Sleepers, while also encouraged meditation and mindfulness to purify their minds.

The Shi-Rén have recently grown, thanks to the influx of Wūlóng members abandoning their former sect in favor of the better positioned Shi-Rén. These new members have greatly complicated the Shi-Rén's hierarchy, as existing members are now senior and junior to many of the newcomers, depending on how someone wants to measure seniority. Some of the former Wūlóng leadership, notably Jīnyú Xī (p. XX), now have roles near their previous level of authority.

The Shi-Rén's current leader, Māpana, has ramped up the Shi-Rén's efforts from wellness classes and martial arts cinema to internet videos. Her goal is to lower the bar to entering these practices to the point of mass acceptance.

Vajrapani: Warriors

The Scales of the Dragon, the Vajrapani are the warrior sect of the Akashayana. Seeking enlightenment through sweat and blood, they believe the truths found in action are more potent than those found through mere reasoning. In addition to physical toil, they are the enforcers of the Tradition. Despite their reputation as brutal badasses, the Vajrapani avoid killing, seeking to prevent killing's karmic stain. This doesn't mean that the Vajrapani have lost their will; those the Vajrapani feel are beyond redemption live on borrowed time.

Beyond the direct application of violence, the monks are also heavily involved in martial arts studios around the world, ensuring a clear transmission of knowledge through lineages. They also keep an eye out for potential new members. Although the proliferation of mixed martial arts has complicated lineage-based styles, Shīfū Aṣ-ōk created a new martial arts school, blending the existing 36 Vajrapani styles together, creating a system with a lineage, but more interesting to modern fighters.

As the Vajrapani's leader, Aṣ-ōk is responsible for monitoring Technocratic operations around the globe and coordinating with his Primus, as well as allies in other Traditions.

Wulóng: Dragon Wizards

The Dragon Wizards were once foes of the Akashayana, famously destroying the Shaolin Temple. As Heaven's mouthpieces on Earth, they were the sole source of religious wisdom and salvation for China. After the War in Heaven severed their connection with the Shen, the Wūlóng

The Digital Web

Many Akashi have taken notice of the rise of the Digital Web and the increasing importance of the internet. Most pai have begun experimenting with the new media, taking advantage of communication previously impossible without Correspondence. The Primus Nu Ying is especially fond of video conferencing, as it allows him to communicate with hundreds of people without leaving his Bodhimandala or risking Paradox. Similarly, the Lì-Hài, under direction of Mot Hoi Tho, makes extensive use of the Digital Web to siphon billions from conglomerations into humanitarian organizations around the world.

This trend isn't universally accepted. The most traditional pai, the Kannagara and the Wūlóng, see the Digital Web and internet as unproven ground. While the Kannagara are skeptical of the technological frontiers, the Wūlóng reject them outright, seeing the ease of online communication as bypassing hierarchy and reducing their already weakened voices.

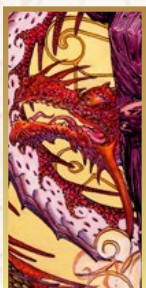
shattered. Most joined the Akashayana or the Order of Hermes, with a sizable minority of hardliners maintaining their independence as members of the Disparate Alliance.

The Akashic Wūlóng still see themselves as the intermediaries of the Shen, with their primary responsibility to reopen the connection between Earth and the Heavenly Realm of the Shen. To this end, they're partnered heavily with the Kannagara to understand what happened to the

Shen. Although the Wūlóng have long maintained their own education, they've reluctantly agreed to allow the Kannagara to train prospective new Wūlóng.

After Jīnyú Xī left the Wūlóng to join the Shi-Rén, Shífù Wáng Jié is now the only master left in the Wūlóng, leaving him unquestionably the most powerful among the smallest pai.

Notable Personalities



Unlike many other Traditions, there are few notable Akashi, or — more accurately — most notable Akashi are a handful of members, reincarnated into new bodies. Only about half of each generation of new Akashic members are new. The rest return life after life; just as members seek to perfect themselves through practice and dedication, dharmaseeks to perfect the cosmos through repetition of specific lives.

Yanhu

Also known as Smoke Tiger, Yānhǔ is infamous for two things: triggering the Himalayan Wars by slaying Ranjit and

being the first known Akashi with an eternal lùkǒu bond born of anger instead of love; Yānhǔ and Ranjit have been killing each other for nearly three millennia.

Their second-most recent reincarnations broke their entwinement by not killing each other. Instead, Yānhǔ learned the truth of the Himalayan Wars — that the elders engineered the conflict to unite factions. General Chan Ng revealed this hoping to quell his soldier, but the ploy backfired when Yānhǔ grew furious at the revealed machination. Ng executed Yānhǔ to keep the secret.

Although Yānhǔ's current incarnation doesn't know the secret nor that Ng killed her, her Avatar has been feeding her fragments of those memories. At present, she believes

Eternal Names

Between birth names, reincarnation, and monastic names, each Akashi has at least a half dozen names. Simplifying record keeping, many Akashi use their eternal name, also known as a timeless name — a more literal translation of the Chinese wúshí míngzì. These names tend to be short, eschewing titles and surnames. Most are monastic names from their first known incarnation in that incarnation's native tongue. Most Akashi — even those not reincarnated — use their eternal name among peers, although this isn't a requirement.

that Ranjit killed her last life, but grows less certain of that fact each day. Her current body is a twenty-year-old Filipino woman from Cebu City at the end of her sidai period.

Hyeonmyeong Sunim

Hyeonmyeong's fate is uncertain (see *Future Fates: War in Heaven*, p. XX). If he lives, he is the Primus of the Akashayana. If he perished, see **Hyeonmyeong** for his new incarnation.

Orphaned at a young age, monks of the Buddhist monastery atop Mount Gwanak took Hyeonmyeong in and later forced him to leave after he questioned the monastery's hierarchy once too many times. Humiliated and abandoned for a second time, he faced depression and homelessness alone, eventually Awakening after healing his wounded mind. He found his way to the Kannagara in 1583 and rose in prominence, even gaining the Buddhist title of Sunim. After the pragmatic Primus Wu Jin saw Hyeonmyeong's skill at mediating conflict, he stepped down and appointed Hyeonmyeong Primus in 1890, believing the Korean monk's gentle guidance would improve the Akashayana.

Since then, Hyeonmyeong has struggled to maintain a sense of the present. Despite all that he's endured and his numerous duties, he still maintains an affable air, which means many who speak with him feel as though they're talking to an old friend.

Hyeonmyeong

If Hyeonmyeong Sunim perished in the War in Heaven (p. XX), he has since reincarnated into a Korean-American trans man from Oakland. Although his passport says he's Ethan Hong, he now goes by his eternal name, Hyeonmyeong. Some still use the honorific Sunim to address him, but doing so flusters the twenty-three-year-old, as he doesn't feel that he's earned it. The young Hyeonmyeong is a talented MC, famous for wowing crowds and bridging gaps between rival gangs.

Because of his microphone skills, when Xiāo Měilíng recruited him to the Akashayana in 2009, his parents assumed she was a talent scout trying to sign him to a K-pop band and grew excited at helping him live his dream as a rapper. By the time his parents understood what was happening, they were too excited at the prospect of Hyeonmyeong living life on his terms to change their minds. Over a decade later, Hyeonmyeong completed his sidai period, and like his previous incarnation, elected to stay with the Kannagara. Although not officially part of his duties, he regularly makes trips to Korea and America's West Coast to teach meditation and rap skills, which has been far more effective than anyone would have thought. Like his previous incarnation, he bears a flame-shaped birthmark on the left side of his neck.

Xiaofeng Qiu

Also known as Fall Breeze, Xiǎofēng has been a high-profile member of the Akashayana since her selection to represent them in 1466 in the March of the Nine. Since her death at the hands of Heyl Teomim, she has been a frequent member of the Li-Hài, using her perennial facility with languages to bridge gaps between sides in conflicts.

Xiǎofēng has the distinction of having two lùkǒu: Sataghni, who is frequently her lover, and Yifū Mǎ, who is bound by murderous hatred. After Ms. Mǎ's last attack, Xiǎofēng nearly quit the Akashayana. Only through gentle counseling with Hyeonmyeong Sunim did she decide to join the Li-Hài, where she could study both psychology and traditional Eastern medicine. She now serves as a medic and therapist for Akashi, wounded Sleepers, and even enemies in need, especially during missions involving Sataghni. While the two are often lovers, Xiǎofēng's current incarnation is asexual and aromantic, leaving the two close friends, but otherwise unentangled.

Sataghni

Also known as Battering Ram and Hundred Killer, Sataghni is a recurring member of the Vajrapani, although she frequently treads close to the Li-Hài in philosophy, even joining them in a few lifetimes. Because of this blend of ideologies, she regularly adapts anything she feels will give her an edge over her opponents, including firearms, which most foes learn too late. In fact, Sataghni has a love-hate relationship with the rise of Hong Kong-style action films that blend martial arts and guns. For the most part, she's disgruntled by their lack of realism but enjoys the spectacle, sometimes taking inspiration for new techniques.

Sataghni spends most of her time training and going on missions to disrupt the Akashayana's foes. She's often found in the company of her lùkǒu Xiǎofēng Qiū.

Nature: Vigilante

Demeanor: Survivor

Attributes: Strength (Lean) 5, Dexterity (Graceful) 4, Stamina (Tireless) 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits (Fox-Witted) 4

Abilities: Alertness (Ambushes) 4, Art 2, Athletics (Parkour) 4, Awareness 3, Brawl (Dirty Fighting) 5, Computer 1, Cosmology 2, Drive 2, Empathy 2, Enigmas 2, Esoterica 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms (Quick-Draw) 4, Intimidation 3, Leadership 2, Martial Arts (Dō) 5, Medicine 3, Meditation (Dō) 4, Melee (Weapons of Opportunity) 4, Occult 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Survival (Old-School Wisdom) 4, Technology 1

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Avatar: 2, Legend 1, Past Lives 3, Resources 2, Status 2

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5,
Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 3 (seven soak dice total)

Arete: 6

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 2, Forces 4,
Life 2, Mind 3, Prime 3, Time 2

Equipment: Enhanced clothing, a light pistol plus
ammo, many knives, lockpicks

Image: Tough, unflappable, and hiding at least
three things at any given moment. If the 30-something
Malaysian woman were any more street smart, you
wouldn't see her coming.

Roleplaying Notes: You're not here to make
friends; you already have one that's stuck with you
through dozens of lives. And if anyone threatens her,
they'll be lucky to be breathing when you leave.

Focus: *Ancient Wisdom is the Key* (Book of Secrets
p. 190) which she accesses through martial arts, qi
manipulation, and medicine work.

Meiling Xiao

The Vajrapani's golden woman of the turn of the century has matured into one of the Akashayana's younger leaders. Because of her unusual proficiency and ability to find Beijing's Bodhimandala without undergoing recruitment, many are surprised that Měilíng has no known prior incarnation. After training with both the Lì-Hài and Vajrapani, she ended up leaving both to travel the world, seeking to understand emotions better before returning the Vajrapani.

Her travels led her to work as an enforcer for a smuggling ring. After years of battling foes with less than monastic emotional control, she finally understood how feelings affect combatants, and became one of the Vajrapani's finest combatants. Now, she's constantly on the move, blocking the Technocracy's moves from the shadows, trying to learn if she has a past life, and doing what she can to help her Sleeper family without putting them in danger.

Jinyú Xi

Formerly the Phoenix Empress-Wizard-Regent of the Wūlóng, Jīnyú is one of the leading voices in the Shì-Rén. Not only is the woman a powerful Life mage, she's also a canny diplomat, with dozens of people claiming to be her best friend. If any of them are right, she's not telling.

Shífù Xī is hundreds of years old, though exactly how many hundred is a fact clouded in misdirection and

conflicting sources, much like everything else in her life. Complicating the historical records of her is the fact that she's a skilled shapeshifter, often appearing in different forms, not all human. People suspect that she's penned at least one of her biographies using an alias. Whether it contains a skewed version of her life or nothing but lies is anyone's guess.

Jīnyú was one of the first of the Akashic Wūlóng join the Akashayana and led their sudden shift to the Shì-Rén, a tactic likely intended to give the legalists more weight among the Akashi. If that was her goal, it hasn't quite worked, although only time will tell what else she has up her sleeves. As the Shì-Rén's third-highest ranking member, she has her hands full with constant bureaucratic machinations affecting the entire globe, something that she deeply enjoys.

Nu Ying

If Hyeonmyeong Sunim is dead or missing (Future Fates: War in Heaven, p. XX), Nu Ying is the current Primus of the Akashics. Also known as Raging Eagle, Nu Ying is blessed and cursed with an eidetic memory that even extends to his Avatar's memories. Although this means that many of the hard-learned lessons he's had over the past millennia are still fresh in his mind, it also means that the sins of his past are close at hand; like Chan Ng, he's killed Akashi to protect the Jnani's secret motive for the Himalayan Wars.

The blood on his hands is heavy, with one of his incarnations born into the Pit of Harmony to suffer for a lifetime. When he reincarnated in the early 18th century, he found himself on a short karmic leash. According to the Akashic Record, all Awakened incarnations of Nu Ying will die after a week away from a Bodhimandala. Since then, his incarnations have been members of the Kannagara, seeking to atone for his past crimes through lives of simple asceticism, fading into the background of the Akashayana.

After the War in Heaven, the Akashi needed an experienced voice that they could trust, and many turned to the man who'd spent most of the past four centuries trying to repair his soul. So far, he's proven a capable leader, with millennia of wisdom ready to dispense. Despite his skill at leading the Akashayana, he feels unworthy of the title of Primus and seeks to find a more worthy Akashi to pass it on to.

Paradigm

The paradigms of Akashi can vary from practitioner to practitioner, but most see magic as *A Mechanistic Cosmos*, albeit a view of the cosmos specific to the Akashayana.

Draladharmā: The Power of the Universe

One of the guiding principles of the Akashayana, Draladharmā is a compound word of Drala, Tibetan for “above the enemy,” and Dharma, Sanskrit for “acting in accordance with the cosmic laws.” Together, they express the idea that there are no enemies, or more accurately, all problems – both external and within each Akashi – are the same. Since they are all part of the same Tapestry, treating foes differently than problematic thoughts places a wall between you and reality, implying that you are better than your foes. Instead, not only must you rise above enemies, you must also rise above your own ego, seeing yourself not as a morally neutral actor within a conflict, but as you truly are.

Only through viewing yourself within the context of the universe can cosmically correct choices be made. This is the Draladharmā. It is how Akashi perform seemingly impossible. When Akashics dance across water or punch through steel, they do not do so through will alone; they act in concert with the cosmic forces already moving toward that future outcome. What is Earth’s gravity but one force among dozens? What is the compression strength of steel compared to that of the universe’s will?

Of course, it is one thing to know that a cosmically correct choice exists. It’s an entirely different thing to know what that choice is. For this, there is only one tool: the Akashic Record.

The Akashic Record: Guide to Draladharmā

The Akashic Record is the cosmic repository of information. It contains every action, thought, intent, and event in the universe that has ever happened, is happening, or will happen and how the universe received them. By consulting the Record, one can see actions and how well they flowed with the forces of the universe. To put it less vaguely, Akashi consulting the Akashic Record can perceive these events’ karmic balance, a measure of how ‘good’ or ‘bad’ an action was. Since the cosmic laws themselves are unknown, even archmages are left to evaluate patterns of karmic balance in the hopes that they can discern what the cosmic laws might be and act with righteousness.

This enables the Akashayana to participate in horrific events such as the Himalayan Wars; the violence and hateful emotions of the conflict were tragic and horrible, but the righteousness of the unity that it inspired among the Akashayana, Chakravanti, Ahl-i-Batini, and others out-balanced the individual suffering, at least according to the Akashi who monitored the Record during the period.

Unfortunately, the Akashic Record has no physical form, outside of small excerpts documented by the Kannagara. It can’t be downloaded or browsed. No one has ever glimpsed the entire Record, let alone begun to comprehend it. Through meditation, submerging one’s mind and letting it merge with their surroundings, it becomes possible to grasp fleeting parts of the Record. Of course, meditation is but one path among many.

Do: The Way to Draladharmā

Known by many names, Dō is the Japanese pronunciation of a word meaning “way” or “path.” It is often understood in the West to mean a single correct path; in truth, the word is neither singular nor plural. The road each person must take is different. Thus, Dō takes many forms. Most who know of the Akashayana’s Dō are familiar with the martial side of it (*Mage 20*, pp. 426–430); it is a potent collection of fighting arts, but violence is but one path for Akashi.

For one person, Dō might be meditating for weeks without eating or drinking, barely breathing, in order to reach a higher level of consciousness. For others, it might be perfecting their horse stance through rigorous trials and tests. Dō is the source of Akashic power, not because it trains Akashi to punch harder or meditate deeply; it aligns their mind and body with the universe, so that when they act, they do not move with merely their flesh and blood, but with the force of the entire cosmos.

In practical terms, each Akashi’s Dō tends toward repetitive actions, allowing them to perform a technique over and over, varying details slightly, and observing how the Akashic Record considers those changes. A Vajrapani warrior might throw a spinning hook kick hundreds of times, altering their movements toward perfection. A Li-Hài willworker might take a time-honored practice and strip out traditional details until they found the true core of the act.

Although beliefs of how to find and travel the path are endless, they follow similar themes. All Akashayana are trained in the Eight Limbs of Expertise (*Mage 20*, p. 428), but not all Akashi’s paths lead through all of them. In truth,

few Akashayana except Shīfū and Masters regularly practice all eight. Though awareness of each is necessary to maintain balance, many Akashics only focus on a handful.

Common Practices

Martial arts is one of the first practices that people think of when they picture the Akashayana, but *craftwork* is common, particularly among the Kannagara who make their own meditative aids. *Crazy wisdom* is more common than a lot of Akashics would like to admit and just not among the Jnani. Of course, *dominion* is the primary practice of the Shi-Rén. Naturally, *faith* in Draladharma is virtually omnipresent within the Akashayana. *High ritual magick* is uncommon, although growing more popular as the wisdom of the Wūlóng spreads. *Medicine work* is common among the Li-Hài, as is *reality hacking*. The Jnani are known for Shamanism, and all Akashics are at least familiar with using *yoga*. An ancient practice not specific to the Akashayana, but very common among them is *qi manipulation*.

New Mage Practice: Qi Manipulation

Qi – formerly spelled “chi” and pronounced ki in Japanese – is a broad term for different energy types, chiefly yin and yang. Though often misunderstood by those outside the Practice, qi is simply a form of energy that flows through most things in the universe. The nature and speed of this flow varies depending on the object and its surroundings, its geographical position, its orientation to other objects (both near and celestial), and other factors too numerous to list

here. Understanding the fundamentals of qi’s movement is a common route to Draladharma. After all, someone who knows how qi ought to flow in an area can simply follow the qi’s path, no need to consult the Akashic Record.

When qi moves freely and properly, the life of an area is naturally enriched. The breezes within forests and winds whipping down mountains create harmony within nature, allowing things to grow and flourish. When the flow of qi is blocked, it becomes turbulent and vicious, potentially poisoning the unwary. When the types of qi are imbalanced, things can be even worse; particularly high levels of yang qi can cause dead bodies to rise as jiāngshī, vampire-like monsters who kill and drain Quintessence. (**Gods & Monsters**, p. 113)

Naturally, sensing and manipulating qi is vitally important for the natural order of things, as it allows mages (and many talented Sleepers) to repair disturbances in the flow of qi (or even create them). Fēng shuǐ masters design houses and urban landscapes to maintain healthy qi movement, for wellness in city dwellers. Acupuncturists selectively block the flow of qi within patients to correct imbalances.

Of course, practitioners don’t always aim to repair things using qi. They can deliberately create imbalances or blockages to hinder foes. Such problems can even serve as a training tool, allowing new practitioners to learn to feel qi instead of simply relying on rote memorization of principles. All this barely scratches the surface of qi and only reflects one perspective; many others exist.



Common Instruments

Bodywork and meditation are the most common instruments of the Akashayana, with as many varieties as there are members. Books, scrolls, and periodicals are common particularly among the Li-Hài and Shi-Rén, although the two have very different levels of reverence for ancient texts. Brews, potions, powders, and other concoctions are especially common among the Jnani and Shi-Rén, particularly practitioners with Taoist and shamanic backgrounds. Celestial alignments are a crucial element for understanding qì. Dances, gestures, postures, and other movement practices are common throughout the Akashayana, although most practitioners are tired of horse stance. The Akashayana takes its name from one of the elements, and the others are common in rituals, although which elements vary, with different Asian cultures disagreeing on whether metal and wood are elements. Energy is common in general, especially with those using qì manipulation. Surprisingly, fashion is a big part of the Akashayana, with most Akashi either wearing a uniform or defying uniforms with their own personal style.

Herbs, roots, seeds, flowers, and plants mainly see use among Jnani. Mass media is almost exclusively a tool of the Shi-Rén, with even older members taking advantage of the changes of technology. Music, particularly traditional songs, are common, especially among the Li-Hài and Jnani. Ordeals and exertion are near universal within the Kannagara and Vajrapani. Prayers and invocations exist in some form in each of the sects.

New Instrument: Qì tools

Although many tools exist to aid with *qì manipulation*, the most common are luópǎn and acupuncture needles. Luópǎn – specialized compasses – allow fēng shuǐ experts to understand how qì flows to and through a location, giving them the ability to identify problem areas or places that would be ideal for a ritual. Acupuncture needles serve a more active purpose, letting qì experts to block and unblock the meridians that control the flow of energy through the human body. By controlling how qì flows, they're able to create changes. Though most are familiar with the medicinal side of acupuncture, qì experts need not choose the path of peace when applying their talents; blocking an opponent's meridians can incapacitate or kill.

Some Akashi wield these in unconventional ways, such as deliberately blocking the flow of their own qì in order to concentrate yin or yang in a body part, allowing them to sacrifice some of their own energy to bolster a working.

New Instrument: Mantras

Commonly associated with meditation, mantras are sounds with magickal properties. Though over a billion

people regularly use mantras, few achieve the same sort of impact on the world that Akashi can. Akashic mantras take the same form as their mundane counterparts; a sound, word, or phrase repeated over and over, often loudly and forcefully. As magickal tools, mantras serve two major purposes: allowing the mage to focus their minds on a single task and creating useful vibrations.

Toward the first end, chanting mantras is no easy task; mantras are rarely quiet, with mages often needing to engage their core muscles to properly stabilize their voices, like professional singers. For beginners, this is a complex task, requiring muscular coordination throughout their entire body, to say nothing of the lung control required to power unceasing repetition of magickal sounds. By the time Akashi graduate from their sidai phase, they have spent enough time honing the skill that they no longer need to think about how to recite the mantra; they merely need to do it. Their mind remains free to focus on the intent of their working.

Secondly, by creating and sustaining vibrations, Akashi gain a foothold in the reality of their surroundings. Through the mantra itself, they create a point of sonic energy that is both magickal and mundane. Moreover, these points of energy are known to the Akashi; they have spent years creating them and are aware of their properties and limitations. Though the energy has no solid form, it is as real and as reliable as any physical instrument.

New Instrument: Memories

For reincarnated Akashi, the most common instrument is simply remembering how a past life performed a similar task. Not all Akashi have past lives, and even those who do must learn and practice the skill of deliberately accessing past life memories. In fact, for those unpracticed in such techniques, trying to remember past lives can hinder more than help. It requires specific focus and intent to sift through hundreds of years of history to find the right moment. Attempting to remember without the right mindset can result in simple failure at best to experiencing a distracting and traumatic event while already in harm's way.

Fortunately, Akashi aren't alone in this effort; their Avatars serve as a bridge between all their lives, giving the Akashayana a vital ally in finding and interpreting these memories. Avatars serve as a guide, allowing mages to seek out the right lifetime at the precise moment needed. This allows them to simplify challenges from "doing the impossible" to "doing the impossible again."

Wonders

While the Akashayana use a variety of Wonders, the item below is popular among all factions of the Tradition.

••• Dragon Pearls

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost 6 pts.

Despite their name, dragon pearls rarely take the form of pearls; the name is a reference to the dragon pearls of East Asian myth, as well as the Dragon guide of the Sān Xing.

Because Akashics reincarnate, many of them take advantage of this by slowing transferring quintessence into an object of power, typically one that's representative of their eternal name. The form this takes is incredibly personal to the mage, providing protection from the scrutiny of others. For this reason, when an Akashi dies, it's customary to inter their belongings with them. Although it would be easy for their fellows to identify this item out of all the deceased's belongings, they usually refrain from doing so out of respect for their fallen.

When the reincarnation rejoins the Akashayana, they receive their former self's belongings. Some Bodhimandala do not do this immediately, instead waiting until the Akashi completes their sidai training.

Although the uninitiated may see these items as simple Tass batteries, they're often more complicated. This isn't by design but due to unconscious patterns created by centuries of rituals enacted by the same Avatar. Hundreds of repetitions of drawing quintessence and storing it for similar purposes over centuries creates patterns within the artifacts themselves. In essence, these items know how to do a specific task. Thus, the mages have a guide to remind them of who they are and what they can do.

System: Like all transfers between quintessence and Tass, using Dragon Pearls as batteries requires Prime 3 to store or withdraw energy. Though this is useful, it is the magick echoes within the Pearls that make them prized possessions throughout lifetimes. With an action, an Akashi can use a Dragon Pearl to remind them how to cast a rote they know, granting +1 die to Arete rolls for rotes. This cannot increase an Arete roll over 5 dice; masters don't need training wheels.

Unlikely Allies

The Akashayana are founding members of the Traditions, but Akashi (particularly the Li-Hài) seek allies where they can.

The Disparate Alliance

For the most part, the Akashayana and the Disparates stay in separate orbits, with many Akashics — particularly in the Kannagara and Shi-Rén — seeing the Disparate Alliance as too disorganized and the Disparates seeing the Akashics as too old-fashioned. The Wūlóng of the Disparates, of course, want nothing to do with their Akashic counterparts. Although the Akashics and Disparates formally recognize each other as allies, virtually all the real diplomatic relations occur through the Li-Hài, whose relaxed philosophies allow them to better interface with the various allied Crafts.

Two notable exceptions to this informal policy involve the Jnani's ongoing communication and informal gatherings with the Bata'a and Ngoma. Though the three groups don't quite trust each other, they each understand the other two have practices and beliefs that are worth learning more about.

Members of the groups meet twice a year, although where and when seem completely random to outsiders.

The Technocracy

Although few would consider the Technocracy an ally of any of the Traditions, the Akashics — particularly the Shi-Rén — have long accepted the Union as an unfortunate fact of life. Direct deals between Technocrats and Akashi remain rare, but unspoken arrangements where neither group openly attacks the other's bases of operation are common. It's not uncommon for large cities to have multiple Akashic sects and Technocratic Methodologies represented. While street fights are rare, indirect struggles of terranorming (**Technocracy Reloaded**, p. 66) are common.

Further confusing relations with the Technocratic Union, the Yellow Dragons of the NWO and the Li-Hài have each had members defect to the other over the course of the past hundred years. Whether these defectors simply had a change of heart or were infiltrating their rival is unprovable, but hotly debated at times.

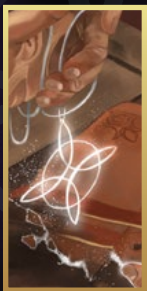


Celestial Chorus

Dogma is a tool of the narrow and fearful. I have walked the frigid expanse of the kuzimu, visited the kingdom of the Rakshasa, and witnessed a crimson-feathered angel whose very presence filled the sky with a threnody for lost innocence. See and hear these things then tell me there is but a single path to the One.

— Angeli Soledad, Primus of the Celestial Chorus

Overture



Belief shapes reality and few things define belief like religion. A simple belief observed repeatedly is that there is some single thing that is greater than us and that I will recognize it with my community. The Chorus seeks out and requires both parts, community and belief in something greater. Any mage may be religious, but community is what defines a Chorister. All Choristers also agree to break with their orthodoxies enough to accept practitioners of other beliefs having access to truth and the song of the One. We do not claim all religions are the same or even we all hear the same notes, but we must recognize our shared experience of belief, practice, or both.

Why so much talk in musical terms? We believe the cosmos was brought about by the One's first note and in such practice there is great power. A musician may practice alone, but only with others can we create great melodies and the boundary-shattering harmonies required to save humanity. From there, we can build a future of harmony.

Singing in harmony and welcoming all arrangements of the One's song may sound like a simple task but it has taken us six centuries to learn it. This lesson is embedded in *The Five Doctrines* that guide us. For the first time since the Grand Convocation, a Great Congregation assembled to figure out the role of the Chorus after centuries of infighting and slow decline. Not all agreed and many left. The Chorus finds itself younger, more varied, less strident, and with more to do than ever before. Where will the One's song take us?

History

We began as a single note, a pitch sung by the All-Singer whereupon primordial reverberations created the cosmos. Such is the breath of the One. Some name the Singer while others name the Note; both contain truth. We mark our history from that first note. A tone so clarion it created all that would one day hear it.

The First Age - Soloists

Early on, the song was strong, but the song grew quiet, and Sleepers grew poor of hearing as humanity spread. Some heard the song clearly and called to others to hear as well by sweeping away dissonance or singing loudly and beautifully. Mithra, Enoch, Bhishma, Gilgamesh, and Aharon all heard clearly and followed the first melody to help defend early civilization. The

The Five Doctrines

Doctrine of Charity — We must direct our resources to where they will do the most good. The One is infinite, we are not, seek the advice of others when dividing both rations and spoils.

Doctrine of Comity — We must ignore doctrines that break harmony with others who follow the song of the One. If your own melody precludes others' harmonies, you may be a soloist, although not within the Chorus.

Doctrine of Compassion — We must act with compassion and love toward the Sleepers. Level scorn only at those who have heard the All-Singer's song and still choose dissonance. Even as Sleepers step away from belief, we must guide them from disharmony and silence.

Doctrine of Foresight — We must plan so our singers and the laity they lead can prosper. Each time we thought the final note sung, a new verse in the Ascension War began.

Doctrine of Harmony — We must seek the voices we have hushed or ignored. During our Era of Cacophony, many unique songs were silenced. We may need to know a temporary quietude so we can hear others. We must return the objects of devotion to those who first crafted them as only with one's own instruments can proper music be made.

Dark Singers of the Fallen existed in even these early times. Their choir was small and the powers they trucked with were clumsy. We defeated them easily. They later learned to sing more seductive songs. Some fell to the Dark Singers in their ignorance. The song grew quieter.

The Second Age - The Ensemble Forms

Before Troy fell, before the I Ching was consulted, before the Gathas were written, Mentu-hetep wandered the desert in despair. He was driven from Thebes for his worship of but one god, Aten. After two score days of fasting and prayer, Mentu-hetep received a vision from the One to gather those who still heard and form a great chorus to again fill the world with the One's music. Mentu-hetep bore the signs of visitation and sent a call to gather.

Many dismissed the call, for their god was not the same as this One, and to worship it would bring woe and famine. Others had many gods. To call one the highest would insult many others, losing their favor. But many heeded the call, arriving from across Eurasia and Africa and some places further still. They saw the One in their high god, or cosmic ordering principle, or as the master crafter who forged the stars. Those who knew the One were many. Over days then months, the First Congregation met, and distant parts became sections, and sections became a choir which rang out. Only a partial record of that first choral exists, though many Catechumen claim to hear moments of harmony in a dozen times a dozen languages during their apprenticeships.

Attendees spread back to their home to form Adyta — Chorister Chantries — as safe places for their Congregations to sing. For the next 1,500 years, the Chorus guided the

growth of civilizations harmonized to the One. Many called this our Golden Age.

The Third Age - Vanishing Voices

Strife within the Chorus was rare until the 4th century CE. Most Choristers did little in the lands of other Choristers, but many events, some centuries in the making, disrupted peace through distance. The conversion of Constantine, the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the advent of Manichaeism, the Uprising of the Five Barbarians, and the Edict of Milan reshaped the religious world of the Sleepers and the Chorus along with it. The Christian Messianic Voices rose in power and opposed the previously dominant Roman Cult of Mithras whose pagan membership held many central posts. Within a few centuries the Chorus was majority Christian through conversion, recruitment, and forcing out others, and the Messianic Voices set the Chorus's agenda.

The Cabal of Pure Thought not only advocated for Christian rulership within the Chorus but likewise across the Sleeper world. The thought of forcing a single belief on the world was a new level of doctrinal unity concerning to many. It gained little foothold even within the Messianic Voices. Fed up with inaction, the Cabal departed the Tradition only to reappear in new company later.

This period saw opportunities for harmony and discovery quashed. We greeted the rise of Islam as a challenge rather than a venue to share the One with new peoples. Our formerly healthy Jewish congregation shrank as their holy places became a combination battlefield and trophy. Congregations departed, taking with them sacred songs, Nodes, rituals, and Wonders. The shrinking of the diversity of the Chorus is

Invocation of the First Congregation

(Commentary by Gagandeep Sabharwal,
Chair of the Assembly of Implements and Methods)

Translated from Proto-Sinaitic script:

We who since ancient days have been at war
We who since ancient days have been at _____ (A)
Let that which judges us known the many-faced
Wars we wage within and between ourselves
Against enemies _____ (B)
And in the moment after sword strikes may
We hear the silence of peace (C) _____
All-Singer hear our call know our purpose
Let those here who sing in unity know _____ (D)
And we shall aid all who wish to Sing or
May one day come to song (E) _____ other singers and
Remove the enemy in _____ (F)
And with wisdom we shall reunite (G) _____

(A) — The *Call to Recognition* indicates even in ancient times the Chorus fought disharmony. "Peace" or "rest" are the most likely candidates, but some Choristers believe it was "battle" to indicate the Endless War.

(B) — The *Call to Identify* is believed to be a listing of Dark Singers and other enemies of the One. Some interpret this as a call to a narrow focus of rooting out Nephandi; others consider it an outlining of a general type.

(C) — The *Call to Peace*. The militant orders interpreted this as a cry for perpetual readiness. They see preparedness as worship, while others consider the goal to end such war.

(D) — The *Call to Purpose*. Some believe this was the original mission statement of the Chorus.

(E) — The *Call to Aid*. Previously, the section "wish to sing" to the end of the passage was translated as "all who also sing" suggesting aiding only fellow mages. A recently discovered older papyrus provided the missing line. This discovery was a coup to the more charitable actions of

the Chorus and placed the Chorus as Sleeper-facing, mirrored in the Doctrine of Compassion.

(F) — Often called the *Call to Justice*, this passage was cited to support doctrinal divisions. Current scholarship indicates "remove" is a better translation than the previous "strike down." This passage is likely a reference to dissonance internal to the Chorister not the Chorus, much to the benefit of the Doctrine of Comity.

(G) — The use of "Reunite" was part of the doctrinal support for the recent Grand Congregation. Others thought it was merely a reference to our desire to reunite with the One. The Apocalypitics point to it with glee.

Many passages are still blank, but as time passes and our methods improve, many an old parchment are turned from palimpsest to prophecy. Attempts to magickally investigate the founding of the Chorus have produced unreliable results, but new artifacts and documents come up from time to time. The Assembly of Implements and Methods watches for artifacts, stories, and texts resonant with our history.

known as the Exodus of the Congregations, and the Third Age is sometimes called the Era of Obliteration. The Fellowship of the Peacock Angel, the Ashavates, Rudra's Wake, the Watchers of the Sky Lord, and the Scholars of Shangdi all left the Chorus before the end of the Crusades. Along with the better-known Congregations, many esoteric groups departed. The Thalassites launched their Chantry-ship of coral, shells, and sea creatures into the Pacific to commune with their manifestation of the One known simply as "The Deep" and were never seen again.

The Third Age closed with the true enemies of Ascension becoming known when the Order of Reason formed at the Convention of the Ivory Tower. The Prometheans sought to forge rather than find their own song and then force others to hear it or go silent. The Cabal of Pure Thought was part of their tinny choir. We heard some of our motifs in their works and wept for our song's desecration.

The Fourth Age - Desperation and Reintegration

The Chorister unity hoped for under the Messianic Voices never came. As their section grew, internal dissonance increased and more esoteric questions and niche heresies dominated. Between the nascent Traditions, the Chorus was fighting with the Verbena and Hermetics, both equally besieged by the Order of Reason. When the call for a Grand Convocation came, only the sheer force of will and claims of divine vision from Valoran allowed the Chorus to set its house in order enough to join the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions.

By the end of the 16th century, the Chorus recognized some of its errors, but it was no longer the humanity-guiding entity of the Second Age. We had found peace at great cost. The Batini integrated into much of the Islamic world with unassailable intimacy and subtlety. Similarly, our recruiting in Persia met disruption by the fiery method of the Weavers. Many of the non-Christian groups who had not left turned inward, and a combination of pain and embarrassment kept these groups at arm's length. The ancient Greek Xephonitic Adytum and its cluster of Neoplatonist Congregations were notionally Choristers but would not engage with the Tradition at large for at least four more centuries.

Most Chorus activity until the late 20th century consisted of martial guardian orders hunting down supposed heretics and the Septarians squabbling about doctrine. Some Choristers saw the colonial period as an opportunity to ride empire to a new revival, but conversion at cannon point is rarely earnest.

The end of the 20th century saw a Chorus devoid of its will to fight. Religion was seemingly dying, as many claimed

to believe, but few backed belief with compassion or piety. Many predicted the Chorus's coda, but few feelings spark passion and fury like the feeling of one's way of life dying. In the early 21st century, three events rocked the Chorus: the Reconciliation, the Declaration of Imminence, and the calling of the Great Congregation.

The 21st century witnessed a fading of the Pogrom as wars erupting in the Middle East were called by new crusader states. Simon Paine was a reluctant leader of the Chorus during the tumult after Madam Bantu left. Simon saw the Tradition as listless and divided. Membership spread across quiet practitioners in small cloisters, singers attending to faith communities, zealots who still took the fight to the Prometheans sometimes infused with Templar fury, and the Septarians who still thought the Chorus was a political tool to advance their faith. Simon prayed, and instead of receiving visions of Gabriel as Valoran had, he saw Ganesha, remover of obstacles. He called the Curia, and over the next four months with a passion rare to him, Simon led the Curia in sweeping away much of the Chorus's canon wielding a slim majority. In its place rose *The Five Doctrines* which radically recentered the Chorus as a humanitarian organization focused on Sleeper concerns and the growth of manifold piety in the One.

Many Congregations welcomed the changes; many Congregations did not. The Knights of Saint George, one of the powerful guardian orders, saw the Five Doctrines as a timid response to the problems of evil. Others accused Paine of calling upon Technocratic Adjustments to steer deliberations. Paine didn't budge and, after a tense standoff, the dissatisfied Separatists issued the Declaration of Imminence. This Declaration stated that a more peaceful, Sleeper-focused, and future-oriented Chorus would be its death. The decline of faith was too swift, and other threats were too immediate. More temporally minded Separatists were simply unwilling to part with their Wonders and Nodes seized centuries ago as required by the new Doctrine of Harmony. Paine stood firm and the Separatists departed.

The Chorus reeled from the loss of the Separatists, and in despair, Paine called for a Great Congregation to meet, invite back Congregations previously chased away, record the current membership, and reorganize the remaining Chorus and Curia. At its end, Paine stepped down as Pontifex Maximus, the Primus of the Chorus. The Great Congregation met, and groups thought gone heeded the second great call. Months of debate ensued in the temporary Grand Adytum Horizon Realm forged from an outpouring of great song. At its conclusion, a new Chorus hierarchy emerged based on the three pillars of religious affiliation, geography, and vocation. The Curia dropped its name with its Roman and papal overtones and was now the Council of Song, with a full

17 members again, although more than one was merely an Adept versus the previous 17 Exarchs, all who claimed Mastery.

Paine's final act was to oversee the Great Return as ancient Nodes, Artifacts, Relics, and a few Devices returned to their original owners. He stepped away as the last Pontifex

Maximus, and Angeli Soledad was elected as the first *Diapason*. Named for the simple tool used to generate a pitch when tuning, the new leader would serve as Primus to the Council. With excitement and nervousness, the newly reformed Tradition revealed itself to the Awakened world.

Current Issues

The Chorus's score experienced more revisions in the previous 20 years than in the prior five centuries. The Chorus forges itself anew and is finding not every singer has found a new home among its sections.

Anchorites and Hermits

While reclusive Choristers in monastic Adyta are noble examples of ascetic practice, supporting such singers is costly. With the Doctrines of Charity and Compassion in place, the Chorus withdrew formal support from Adyta with no Sleeper-facing activities. These groups could stay in the good graces of the Tradition by participating in the three-layer committee structure or by providing Quintessence, research, martial or financial aid. These donations known as *apportionments* come due roughly every four years. They are staggered across Adyta, and the Assembly on Choral Membership redistributes apportionments to the wider Chorus in accordance with the Doctrines of Charity and Foresight. Lone Choristers who Awaken outside a traditional faith community but who find a strong draw to the One often spend their time doing such visitations.

Some Congregations chose to leave the Chorus instead often going to the Order of Hermes, Children of Knowledge, Ngoma, Society of Ether, Verbena, Akashayana, or another paradigmatically appropriate group. Departing members took with them much understanding of the Tradition, their new sects eager to hear what information they may have.

Some Choristers scoffed at allowing anchorites to buy off their obligations, but apportionments are a boon to growing Adyta. In exchange, these communities receive aid, updates on worldly and Awakened news, and inspection to ensure dissonance has not taken hold. Such check-ins became commonplace after both the Cloister of Perpetual Silence near Yellowknife in Canada's Northwest Territory and the Home of Peace in Karbala, Iraq fell to the Dark Singers.

A Storyteller may allow a Chorister to purchase a modified form of the Requisitions background called Apportionment. Like Requisitions, Apportionment allows the Chorister to temporarily access dots of Allies, Chantry (in the form of temporary lodging with a monastic Adytum), Contacts, Cult, Library, Node (in the form of Tass), Retainers, Wonder, or Resources. This background

is less predictable than Requisitions as the Chorus lacks both the Technocracy's logistical and bureaucratic skill, and the Storyteller chooses how requests are fulfilled. For instance, a player may anticipate an upcoming session may involve combat and the character requests martial support using their three dots of Apportionment. The Storyteller may fulfill this request with a two-dot Wonder and a few pawns of *Fiery Tass*, or the temporary service of a three-dot Ally, or the use of a well-kitted two-dot War-Song Chantry and a Retainer.

Returning Harmonies

Seeing a new Primus, hearing new doctrine, and learning of the departure of the elements behind their expulsion in the first place, many small Congregations returned to active participation. Some were small sects that we declared heresies or Congregations that felt unwelcome during the rise of the Messianic Voices. These *Returning Harmonies* unbalanced traditional power blocs and made the Chorus overall more varied. These groups were welcome, assuming they met the requirements of the Five Doctrines, so far embraced by the returning Druze, First Nations, and Gnostic Congregations. Many knew strange music bizarre to the rest of the Chorus. Still, they're welcomed.

The rapid turnover in membership resulted in a highly energetic but not yet organized Tradition trying to welcome new groups while still focusing on the Sleeper concerns. Where the previous Chorus strove to be an architect with a top-down structure, the new Chorus is more akin to a gardener as it tries new approaches and weeds those which don't work. Some Returning Harmonies will ultimately leave again, becoming Crafts or collections of Orphans.

Mortal Belief

The Chorus experienced recent growth, but growth in a world of declining religiosity. "None" or "no affiliation" is the fastest growing belief category. Some faith groups may come to an end making the Chorus a possible refuge for otherwise extinct religions.

Someone will eventually seek our membership who recognizes the One but believes all revelation is simply a strange type of understanding of the natural world. At that



point, what would be the difference between that person and a Technocrat? If they were willing to operate a field hospital during a refugee crisis, would it matter?

The Chorus isn't comfortable declaring whose faith does or doesn't recognize the One. A few such members from new religious movements like Caodaist High Tower Seekers and Rastafari Jah's Chorus have found homes within the Chorus, and the Discordian Popes of Eris are under consideration. Rumors abound of Satanist, Dickian Gnostic, or Jedi Catechumen who wish to join. Some members desire Mind magick be employed to verify someone's faith, but to most, Awakening is proof enough.

Quiet and the Mad

Choristers often live their paradigms, integrating belief into every aspect of their lives with intensity. Many Choristers see a world permeated with an all-consuming fight between harmony and dissonance and actively communicate this belief with Sleepers. Sometimes a mage's resonance becomes potent enough to manifest what appear to be miracles. A mage's Avatar may acquiesce to pious wrappings and appear as an

angel, ðityá, or Shen. While the Tradition is exceptionally watchful for Nephandic taint, they often miss their kin likely lost to Quiet. Quiet may take the form of traditional Denial or Madness or an apocalyptic or damnation-inflected kind of Morbidity seeing evil, sin, or taint everywhere. Quiet does not necessarily preclude fruitful song, but the Tradition is ill-equipped to identify and deal with it when it does.

Members claiming to receive revelation remain under scrutiny, but this can prove difficult as some Choristers are literally temporal prophets with their access to the Time Sphere. To many the age of prophecy is closed or limited to a specific group. Other groups believe prophecy is very much alive, and we as a Tradition do not weigh in. On multiple occasions, a member claimed to have received wisdom from the One, gathered a small congregation, and disappeared into the Umbra, exploded in a cloud of Paradox, or otherwise went missing.

Some singers enter a Quiet they embrace and become Marauders. Low-Quiet Marauders are often hard to detect as some manifest their Quiet internally without the regular reality-warping of the Mad. Others certainly manifest Quiet

Factions and the Celestial Chorus

The Celestial Chorus has undergone massive restructuring. Many of the former factions either left, dissolved, or seized the opportunity to reorganize themselves to better fit within the new organization of the Chorus.

As noted above many of the Guardian Orders left to join the Knights Templar. **The Brothers of St. Christopher**, the **Order of St. Michael**, and the **Sisters of Gabrielle** joined the Templars, while the **Chevra Kedisha** and the **Knights of St. George and the Dragon** struck out on their own. Whether these new Crafts join another Tradition or make their way into the Disparate Alliance remains to be seen.

Of the Theological Orders, one could argue that the **Latitudinarians** and **Monists** sit at the forefront of recent events, guiding the attempt to unify — and make space for — all faiths within the Chorus. As with all things, the **Anchorites** followed their individual paths with some acquiescing to apportionments while others parted ways with the Tradition. The **Alexandrian Society's** leanings formed the basis for the Assembly for Promethean Response while the **Children of Albi** and the **Nashimites** effectively dissolved, blending in with the swelling Gnostic congregations who've recently joined the Chorus. The fractitious **Septarians** splintered as some stayed while others left in protest to the restructuring, forming their own Craft.

As for those factions formerly dictated as Other Religions, they have integrated their notes deeper into the harmony of the Chorus or taken their leave with little protest or fanfare. With choices made at the Chantry level, there are those of all religions who stayed, those who left, and those who've just now come into the fold.

but this may be indistinguishable from Paradox, Resonance, or intentional magick. Many Choristers leave ethereal music, a feeling of divine radiance, or the vague scent of sacred herbs or incense in their wake.

No uniform rules exist on dealing with former Chorister Marauders. Some Choristers advocate killing these perversions of the One's song on sight. Peacefully inclined singers advocate relocating the Mad to an Umbral Realm or even monastery befitting their Quiet. Madness is not a problem in any way unique to the Chorus, but a host of intrinsic complications makes it more of an issue here than in other Traditions.

The Loss of the Guardian Orders

Before the Great Congregation, the Chorus stood divided as a cacophony of factions drawn together by religion, purpose, or politics. Among them were the guardian orders who took the fight to the enemy of the One's song. These often-zealous members disproportionately departed under the Declaration of Imminence seeing the Doctrine of Foresight as a luxury the Celestial Chorus lacked. Their departure took much knowledge, might, and magick with them, and many went straight to the Knights Templar or formed their own independent Chantries to fight the enemies of their faiths. The Tradition's singing is now more in time, but its voices are exposed just when it wishes to make the most

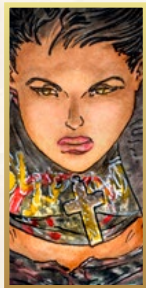
change in the world. Some wish to reconstitute a guardian order as a new Vocational Assembly while others think all Choristers should know some War-Song.

The Apocalypics

Many groups seek a union with the One involving the annihilation of the self. The goal may be to experience a final redemption of a chosen people, freedom from karmic bonds, a revelation of the illusion of reality, or even apotheosis. The Doctrine of Compassion calls for reduction of suffering, but the Apocalypics argue all moments short of transcendence are moments of suffering outside the presence of the One. Apocalypics often wish to play a final note which seems quite like the end the Dark Singers desire.

Some believe before the First Age there was a Zero Age where we were in timeless union with the One and are examples of belief in apocatastasis, a restoration to our primordial state. One such group is the Order of Naught who run a campaign dubbed "The Return to Zero." Their sign is a Greek letter theta with the word "return," "union," or "end" replacing the crossbar. They believe the cosmos is in a false vacuum state which if collapsed would usher us into union with the One in an era of light and music. They believe clues on how to collapse reality lay buried in the principles of physics and use cutting edge server clusters to discern the patterns of the heavens.

Magick and Practices



Each Chorister must answer the genesis of their magick, the origin and nature of the One's song. The answer guides the mage's paradigm, and answers take the form of specific *paradigm tenets*. Tenets trace the chain of belief from "this is the nature of reality," to "this is why I can do magick" in a few steps. For instance, a Chorister who believed in intercessory prayer starts with the paradigm of *Creation is Innately Divine and Alive* and may choose tenets of "The One exists", "the One can hear requests for assistance", "the One may grant the requests of the righteous or the just". These three paradigm tenets explain the nature of magickal effects as requests for aid granted by the One. The tenets also outline something the paradigm cannot do: aiding the unjust. Paradox may manifest as punishment for greedy requests or for failing to solve problems on one's own. The practice and instruments for this paradigm would be the ways in which the character petitions the One.

Another set of tenets may be a refinement of *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos* and consist of "there is a cosmic hierarchy of beings with the One at its apex", "pious humans go up the hierarchy", and "entities in the hierarchy may command beings below them or petition beings above them if addressed in the proper way". This set of tenets creates a magickal style around negotiating with the celestial order.

Paradox may appear to be from one misunderstanding their place in the hierarchy. Practices and instruments would be the way in which one exerts their position in the hierarchy and petitions other entities.

A deist may have tenets of "The One created the cosmos with great skill and subtly," and "there are rules to the cosmos available to all who study the One's work." This is a more nuanced version of *A Mechanistic Cosmos*, and this mage would not find belief a predicate for magick, merely the observance of practice and instrument. Their religiosity may simply be an appreciation of the One's handiwork. Paradox may be seen as the partial understanding of the rules causing calamity or may be angering the entities maintaining cosmic order.

Having tenets can help address important roleplaying components like how a crisis of faith affects a character's magick, and how Sphere advancement manifests to a character.

Optional Rule: Stable Wellsprings

Nodes represent places of exceptional potential where song can more easily break forth. Alternatively, Nodes may form in places where wondrous or emotionally powerful things happen. An active religious community brings together emotion, belief, and hope making a Node spontaneously form. Most of the quintessence a community generates will go back into the community, meaning the fervor one brings may bolster others



in the community. The *Node* background can represent the force of belief a community embodies, but a table may wish to use the *Stable Wellspring* background instead to represent a potent emotional upwelling which can reliably produce quintessence or Tass which is not precisely tied to a location. A mage may replenish quintessence at a *Stable Wellspring* formed by a community by engaging with the activity of the community. Examples include walking a labyrinth, copying a religious text, participating in a choral group, observing appropriate puja, doing charitable works, or performing prayers.

Each *Stable Wellspring* generates quintessence per an equivalent *Node* so if a three-point *Node* generates three points of quintessence in a week, so does a three-point *Stable Wellspring*. The *Stable Wellspring* may store quintessence equal to twice its rating with any unused quintessence simply returning to the Tapestry. If a *Stable Wellspring* is drawn down to zero quintessence or all its Tass is removed, members may feel they're no longer refreshed or finding meaning in the group's activities, and the *Stable Wellspring's* rating will drop by 1 until some activity is done to help shore up the community. *Stable Wellsprings* can also grow due to narrative events such as growing a faith community.

A *Stable Wellspring* can't easily be raided by traditional means and is largely invisible or useless to other Night-Folk with *Node*-like locations. The quintessence flow can be disrupted by strife or discord at the site or within the organization forming the *Stable Wellspring*. A *Stable Wellspring* that doesn't host the activities defining it for more than a week per dot of its size will stop producing new quintessence and Tass and will start to shrink. If the core community activity returns, the *Stable Wellspring* will grow to its previous size at the rate of one week per dot being recovered. A four-dot *Stable Wellspring* which shrank to a two-dot *Stable Wellspring* requires three weeks of attention to recover its third dot and another four weeks to recover its fourth and final dot. Large *Stable Wellsprings* attract the notice of Nephandi who wish to pervert such purity, Marauders with Quies endorsing or directly opposing the *Stable Wellspring*, and Syndicate members who intuitively sense *Stable Wellsprings* as some sort of Venture they wish to disrupt or capitalize on. A *Stable Wellspring* may also be mobile if tied to a traveling community.

Optional Rule: Modified Great Works

Choristers often create effects through extended rituals or Great Works (Mage 20, p. 540). Instead of using the standard rule of rolling once every five hours of continuous activity, a Chorister may instead break it up over many smaller sessions at a regular interval (weekly, monthly, every full moon) each of at least one hour in length. All

contributing activities toward the Great Work must share a common place such as a house of worship or burial site, an important object such as a relic, piece of ceremonial vestment, or musical instrument, or a group with largely consistent membership. Once the five hours are built up, the mage makes an appropriate Arete roll. Sleepers may find the effect coincidental if the effect accords with their beliefs. This does not prevent other complications from a miraculous effect. A mage who uses a revival meeting to let a paraplegic Sleeper walk may get unwanted attention from the faithful and skeptical alike, and an angelic visitation may make the news and trigger visits from curious Technocrats.

Prayer as an Instrument

Prayer as an instrument is somewhat unique in that a mage may have some sort of religious belief without listing it as an Instrument on the character sheet. An Etherite may have a deep faith not appearing in their magick otherwise, or a Sikh Hermetic may keep the five articles of faith on them without their kesh, kangha, kara, kachera, or kirpan being Instruments in the systems sense. If a Chorister creates an effect with prayer as the instrument other mages who have some notion of either the power of prayer or a sense of religiosity reasonably like the Chorister leading the effect count as Enlightened assistants (Mage 20, p. 542) and add one automatic success given the Chorister's roll does not botch.

Rotes

Choristers often employ rotes reskinned for their faith practice. A Forces 3, Prime 2 effect may be angelic judgment, a reward from the Sky Father, or a brief opening of our divine nature circumventing Ialdabaoth. These rotes are common among the Chorus's training, but more specialized rotes exist.

Palimpsest

(••• Matter/ •• Time/ •• Prime)

Over time, documents fade or are modified and the Palimpsest rote was developed to restore them.

System: Time 2 sifts through the history of the document; Prime generates the materials necessary whether bits of vellum, iron gall ink, or chalk; and Matter 3 and Prime 2 restore the missing materials. Such restorations are highly precise and require successes per the *Time Sphere Timelines* (Mage 20, p. 505) plus three successes for a simple document to 10 to restore a book, or 20 to restore a tapestry, fresco, or frieze.

Dismiss the Discordant

(•• Mind/ •• Correspondence/ •• Entropy/ •• Prime)

This simple correspondence ward repels ill intent toward those in the intended area and follows the rules for *Minor*

Area Wards (HDYDT, p. 99). Wards of this type can guard an entrance against hostile intent or against other objectives with the appropriate added Spheres.

System: Establishing a minor ward requires 10 successes plus one per barred objective plus additional successes to establish the strength of the ward. As with other minor wards, those with a barred objective aren't physically prevented from entering but will quickly become befuddled and leave and have all dice pools while within the area reduced by the number of extra successes initially rolled beyond the minimum to establish the ward. Establishing the ward also costs one point of quintessence plus one additional point per objective. Establishing and maintaining such wards can be the work of lifetimes as a Chorister slowly makes a complex, neighborhood, or compound covered in such wards to protect a community.

Rumors spread of some of the Returning Harmonies in communities with a Correspondence 5, Mind 4 version that cause those without the appropriate beliefs to simply teleport through the area without noticing.

Members

The Council of Song, successor to the Curia, governs the Chorus but hardly exhibits top-down control. The Council coordinates the Chorus and guides its voice in the Awakened world often through the considerable resources wielded by its constituent committees and the personal influence of its members. The Council's 17 Directors, formerly Exarchs, are drawn from the three pillars of activity in the Chorus and include three members from the Committee on Worship, seven members from the Committee of Terrestrial Concerns, and seven members from the Committee of Vocations. Each Chorister has a place in each of the three pillars even if they aren't active in each at all times.

The first pillar is the Committee of Worship and is composed of the faith groups within the Chorus. Each distinct faith receives a seat, although what makes a group distinct can cause much debate. At current, the determination is self-made. By popular vote, three members are selected to sit on the Council of Song for staggered seven-year terms with no two from the same faith group.

The second pillar is the Committee of Terrestrial Concerns composed of the seven Grand Congregations of the Americas, Europe, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, and the Autochthonous and Peripatetic. The Autochthonous and Peripatetic Grand Congregation covers mages who are displaced, migratory, continually traveling, recently moved, across the Gauntlet, or that are surrounded by another culture with which they have minimal interactions. The Grand Congregations are not

a statement of religious homogeneity so much as a structure of mutual aid to nearby Adyta and to react to Sleeper issues unique to an area. The head of each Grand Congregation is elected by popular vote of the heads of each Adyta and receives a seat on the Council of Song.

The final pillar in the Chorus is the Committee of Vocations where each Chorister sings in their own way to aid in the magickal or mundane aims of the Chorus. Membership in an assembly is chosen rather than assigned. The head of each assembly is popularly elected by the participants in the assembly and receives a seat on the Council of Song.

The Committee of Vocation Assemblies

The Committee of Vocations consists of seven standing assemblies and up to two ad hoc assemblies which do not receive a vote on the Council of Song.

The **Assembly on Sleeper Congregations** includes all Choristers who lead or are in charge of maintaining a religious community involving Sleepers and includes the many granthi, rabbis, pastors, members of Spiritual Assemblies, and similar faith group leaders in the Chorus. It is by far the largest assembly and is a forum for troubleshooting and knowledge dissemination. Besides including all forms of community leaders, members often have training as social workers, psychologists, and sociologists to help address street-level problems.

The **Assembly on Promethean Response** directly monitors the Technocracy for acts against the faithful and oversees the Tradition's formal contact with the Prometheans when addressing shared issues. This group hosts signal intelligence experts and technologists, and houses some of the only ordnance experts in the Chorus whose song is simple but forceful. The group currently has a single undercover T3 member up for promotion.

The **Assembly on Infernal Response** directly opposes the Dark Singers and other emissaries of discord. Members receive tips and perform investigations. This group takes responsibility for collecting tainted Tass, Wonders, and potential Infernal texts. Most items are destroyed or purged but seemingly not all. Investigating the Infernal requires a knowledge of history, how to read people, and a willingness to stare at atrocity without flinching.

The **Assembly on Manifestations of Song** investigates the possible remnants of the first note like new Nodes, shallowings, Horizon Realms, the Umbrae, and to some extent the doings of other Night-Folk. The assembly also monitors sorcerous societies that have religious trappings. Many of these singers have a background in magickal research, folklore, geographic information systems, and preferably competence with a machete.

The **Assembly on Implements and Methods** documents the faith practices of cultures and the ways in which song is heard. Sometimes this is figuring out why a piece of contemporary worship music is such an earworm and in other cases involves learning Linear A to unseal a door in a Minoan temple complex. This group draws on statisticians, archaeologists, linguists, and ethnographers and specializes in fading, dormant, or extinct practices. These willworkers may be ethnomusicologists, long-term magick researchers, linguists, and students of comparative religion. This assembly focuses on mortal workings versus the Assembly on Manifestations of Song which focuses on the overtly supernatural.

The **Assembly on Choral Membership** is the communications, logistics, and internal investigation group of the Chorus. They maintain contact between sometimes-far-flung Chantries with Chorus members and investigate claims of violations of the Chorus's Doctrines. Findings are referred to the Council of Song. This group also keeps track of apportionments back to the Chorus and internal resources in the form of money, property, and Wonders. While the Assembly on Sleeper Congregations is the informal connective tissue of the Chorus, this assembly is the formal communications and conferencing assembly and would cover any future Great Congregation.

The **Assembly on Traditions, Affairs, and Outreach** are diplomats and peacemakers of the Chorus who have

been vital in the 21st century. The group staffs and monitors the Chorus's presence in very large Chantries and in multi-Tradition Horizon Realms. The group is also responsible for identifying and safely recruiting newly Awakened mages for entry as Catechumen within religious communities and pairing them with an appropriate Praecept for instruction. To the surprise of many, they refer out a fair number of the newly Awakened to other Traditions if the potential Catechumen lacks interest in community service. Members tend to be charismatic, somewhat streetwise, and often have contacts with at least two other Traditions or Crafts.

The Fellowship of Eminent Music

The Eminentiaries are a small group within the Chorus specializing in massive Great Works. Their effects may involve coordinating potentially dozens of Awakened Choristers and hundreds or thousands of Sleepers. Coordinating such activities can take years, but when the greatest of Wonders need to be created, the greatest of wards need to be erected, or the grandest of Nodes need to be cleansed, these are the people who make it happen. The Eminentiaries tend to be skilled in Correspondence, Entropy, and Time and are also entrusted with maintaining Great Works keeping communities alive or barring some threat from an area. Demands for resources or assistance from a member of the Fellowship may raise eyebrows, but these requests are presumed to meet the Doctrine of Charity.



Notable Personalities

Angeli Soledad

Diapason of the Celestial Chorus

Angeli grew up Protestant on the island of Luzon in the Philippines but always integrated elements of Chinese Buddhism and local belief into her practice. She heard various whispers of what she later thought was the One throughout her life. When she Awakened, the whispers of what turned out to be her Avatar grew more coherent and drove her to explore the Otherworlds and varied interpretations of the revelations of the One across three score Adyta. When the Grand Convocation was called, she already had a vast network of connections and goodwill. She expected to lead an Assembly but quickly rose to lead a Tradition.

After her appointment, a Paradox backlash while investigating the Low Umbra broke through the Tempest and gave Angeli a glimpse of Oblivion. In the maw of nothingness, the whispering of her Avatar stopped. She felt bereft of the One's song. Her magick was unchanged which led to some very deep questions. Her current guess is whatever was whispering wanted to learn the truth. Not that there is no One, but instead They are missing, and her goal is to find Them. Luckily, she has considerable resources at her disposal.

Nature: Prophet

Demeanor: Innovator

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma (Inspirational) 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception (Uncanny Insight) 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness (Resonance) 4, Computer 1, Cosmology 3, Empathy 3, Enigmas 3, Etiquette (Tradition Protocols) 4, Expression 3, Firearms 2, Investigation 2, Law 2, Meditation 3, Melee 2, Occult (Occult History) 4, Politics (Traditions) 5, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3, Survival 1, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Apportionment (Requisitions) 5, Avatar 4, Contacts 6, Library 2, Resources 4, Retainers 5, Sanctum 4, Stable Wellspring (Node) 4, Status 5

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Arete: 6

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 1, Life 4, Mind 4, Prime 5, Time 4, Spirit 4

Equipment: Eye of Agni (3-pt. Periapt)

Image: A relatively recent Master who's just turned 40, although Life and Time have made it so she's accumulated a decade more experience. Her dark

brown skin glows very lightly from a permanent Paradox flaw. The glow is most noticeable when it's very dark. Her penchant for chunky jewelry (including a 3-pt ruby periapt Eye of Agni she received upon becoming Diapason) and short bobbed hair often leads others to think she's in her 30s.

Roleplaying Notes: You're intensely curious about where both your magick comes from and where the One is. Every mage you meet may be a clue, and your contact list is extensive. You feel your Tradition is both millennia old and recently formed, and you don't yet know how to balance that.

Focus: *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos* (**Mage 20**, p. 569). Tenets of "there is a divine order to the One's first note", "the agents of the One whisper secrets to us", "those who hear the whispers can navigate earth's chaos".

Josh Cohen (Yehoshua ben Moshe haKohen)

Chair for the Assembly on Infernal Response

Some attacks on Josh's people were small and subtle like poor jokes and stereotypes. Others attacked it more overtly. After Awakening, he learned yet others wished to shatter his community and its covenant with technique only magick allowed. Evil must be fought, and harms must be repaired.

Josh's Avatar reveals itself from bits of Paleo-Hebrew he finds in strange places and painstakingly translates. The first full line he translated led him to the pair of blades he wields to this day. The combination of scholarship and grit led Josh quickly to the top of the Assembly on Infernal Response. Under his aegis the assembly pivoted from simply destroying the Fallen to righting the harm they've done. Of the two roles, the latter is much harder.

Nature: Crusader

Demeanor: Martyr

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity (Hand-Eye Coordination) 5, Stamina (Tough) 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception (Intuitive) 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness (Covert Pursuit) 4, Art 1, Athletics (Extreme Endurance) 4, Awareness (Spiritual Vidare) 4, Computer 2, Cosmology 2, Drive 3, Empathy 1, Enigmas (Deduction) 4, Esoterica 3, Intimidation (Cold Stare) 4, Investigation 3, Law 2, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 1, Meditation 2, Melee 3, Occult 3, Streetwise 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 3, Technology 3

Backgrounds: Apportionment (Requisitions) 2, Avatar 2, Library 2, Resources 3, Status 3, Wonder 4

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 3 (Enhanced Clothing)

Arete: 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 3, Forces 3, Life 2, Matter 2, Mind 2, Prime 2, Spirit 3

Equipment: A pair of Angel Tear daggers

Image: He is tall and grizzled with olive skin crisscrossed with scars. Most are from the fight where he lost an eye to a K'llasshaa master.

Roleplaying Notes: People tend to view you as cynical, but you're merely taciturn and matter of fact. There is little nuance in your world.

Focus: A Mechanistic Cosmos (**Mage 20**, p. 568). Tenets of "The One created the cosmos", "we along with many other beings are tasked with maintaining the One's work", and "magick is reaching out to other servants for aid".

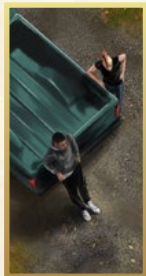
Angel Tear Daggers

Arete n/a, **Quintessence** 10, **Background Cost** 7
Points

A pair of elegantly jagged blades made of unusually sharp bronze marked with the Hebrew names of seven angels in silver filigree. A Forces 3, Matter 3, Prime 3 effect allows the blades to turn into whatever material or force would cause aggravated damage to the target. An additional Mind 3 effect locates such a vulnerability if there is one. A Mind 1 effect conceals the thoughts of the wielder, and a Prime 2 effect modifies the wielder's aura to that of their liking.



Unlikely Allies



We look at both the Technocracy and the Disparates with amazement and concern. The former Sings an artificial song bereft of the motifs of the One. Regardless, the Prometheans sing with such unity that its force shapes the world. The Disparates are a collection of radical harmonies and rhythms who may yet create great music.

Relations with the Technocracy

We look to the New World Order with the anger one musters for family and those once loved. They thought unity of voice was more important than unity with the One, and rather than simply trying to change our score, they sought to disperse our choir. They have finally learned that the Dark Singers lack their unity but can craft songs even more seductive to Sleeper ears than what former Gabrielites can manage. Humbled and subdued, we may again sing together.

Our two groups have so far cooperated in cases where one group felt the other could deal with a threat more efficiently. For instance, the Ivory Tower was able to quickly deal with the Leiden University archaeology team who was slowly being corrupted through Temptor spirits tied to the Annunaku of ancient Babylon. A grant was pulled, some tablets were destroyed, resonance-tainted artifacts were purged, and some post-incident counseling stopped the re-establishment of a modern Etemenanki inside a Danish school.

Another shared area of interest are radical religious movements. The Harbingers of Broken Seals believe the sooner humanity destroys the planet, the sooner we will stand in judgment and rejoin either the silence of the cosmos or the infinite glory of the divine. Their quest for planetary annihilation is entirely separate from whatever similar attempts the Nephandi or their lords may desire. The Technocracy provides intelligence with the implicit threat that if the Chorus cannot stop them, Blacksuits will simply eradicate them all, leader, and congregant alike. Lit embers can travel far and spark distant fires.

The Prometheans and the Chorus differ strongly in investigations of savior figures and signs of the One. Balancing the destructive power of someone claiming the mantle of god against the joy and wonder created by the few blessings still manifesting pits safety against hope. Should we fail to intercede, re-education campaigns, funding hiccups, and well-placed news stories may kill a healthy Sleeper congregation to root out a small fringe element. The Assembly

on Implements and Methods generally attempts to respond first to claims of someone being the Saoshyant or a Messiah, but the Prometheans are nothing if not punctual.

Most NWO cells include Sleepers and low-level operatives still active in a religious community. Using a post-hypnotic suggestion or similarly subtle song, a contact will make known their concerns in our circles during the socialization after Friday prayers, while tending the sacred hearth, during house Church meetings, or other coreligionist gatherings. We reply with other methods such as steganographic messages on house of worship signs, dead drops, and even the occasional face-to-face meetings in public spaces.

The Assembly on Manifestations of Song maintains friendly relationships with a Void Engineer construct that deals pan-dimensional entities that look like creatures from religion. What we may call daevas, ifrit, demons, or Shen depending on form and culture they simply see as genera of something that doesn't belong here. We worry they are overly ruthless and simply shoot everything. While fine when dealing with the Infernal and those outside the One's light, what happens when we encounter a messenger of Sraosha or one of the Chalkydri who may provide us new parts of the One's song?

Relations with the Disparates

The Declaration of Imminence saw many leave our ranks, and some marched directly to the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon. Some departing Choristers were the selfsame who had joined us 20 years ago raising suspicions in some Singers. The militant Palatines and the Separatists who joined them break both the Doctrine of Comity through ignoring other faiths and the Doctrine of Harmony by not seeking to restore other voices. Despite their shortcomings, the sheer amount of firepower they can rain down can be awe-inspiring. Our preference for slow victories means we often need to be farsighted to outmaneuver their Primium crucifixes and hollow-point Deliverance rounds.

The Ahl-i-Batin represent an opportunity for cooperation slowly being explored. We are both masters of the subtle flow of Prime, and the possibility of a modern Web of Faith would be a boon. While we've had little success cooperating in the Middle East, we are on more level footing in East Asia. The Firesong Congregation in Batam acts as our main point of contact. We've worked hand in hand dealing with a Fallen dukun on Madura and a brief outbreak of restless

child spirits. Elsewhere, they do not show us confrontation so much as mistrust.

The Weavers are a curious case to us as we both seek song, truth, and a vibrant display of belief to Sleepers yet we are rebuffed in all approaches. They seem to use the trappings of ancient Persian faith, but few Taftani wish to engage us on that point. They do show us the passion we often lack in our work, and our younger members find their willingness to confront Paradox at every turn both worthy of pity and admiration. They have yet to challenge any of our members to a duel, poetry competition, or light any of our Congregations on fire, and we are choosing to interpret that as a show of potential friendship.

The Children of Knowledge and Chorus both wish for the transcendence of humanity through sacred knowledge, and our songs seem to be distant cousins. They make music with matter in ways befuddling and amazing and distill song into a pill. Their cosmos lacks a beloved maker to it but, like many of our own singers, they seek communion with the note rather than the singer. Our most common overlap is in magickal research. Our archives are vast but their tools and methods are exemplary.

Balmoral Associates

Many demons, angry gafflings, or menacing spirits are held in place with wards and geasa tied to mortal culture.

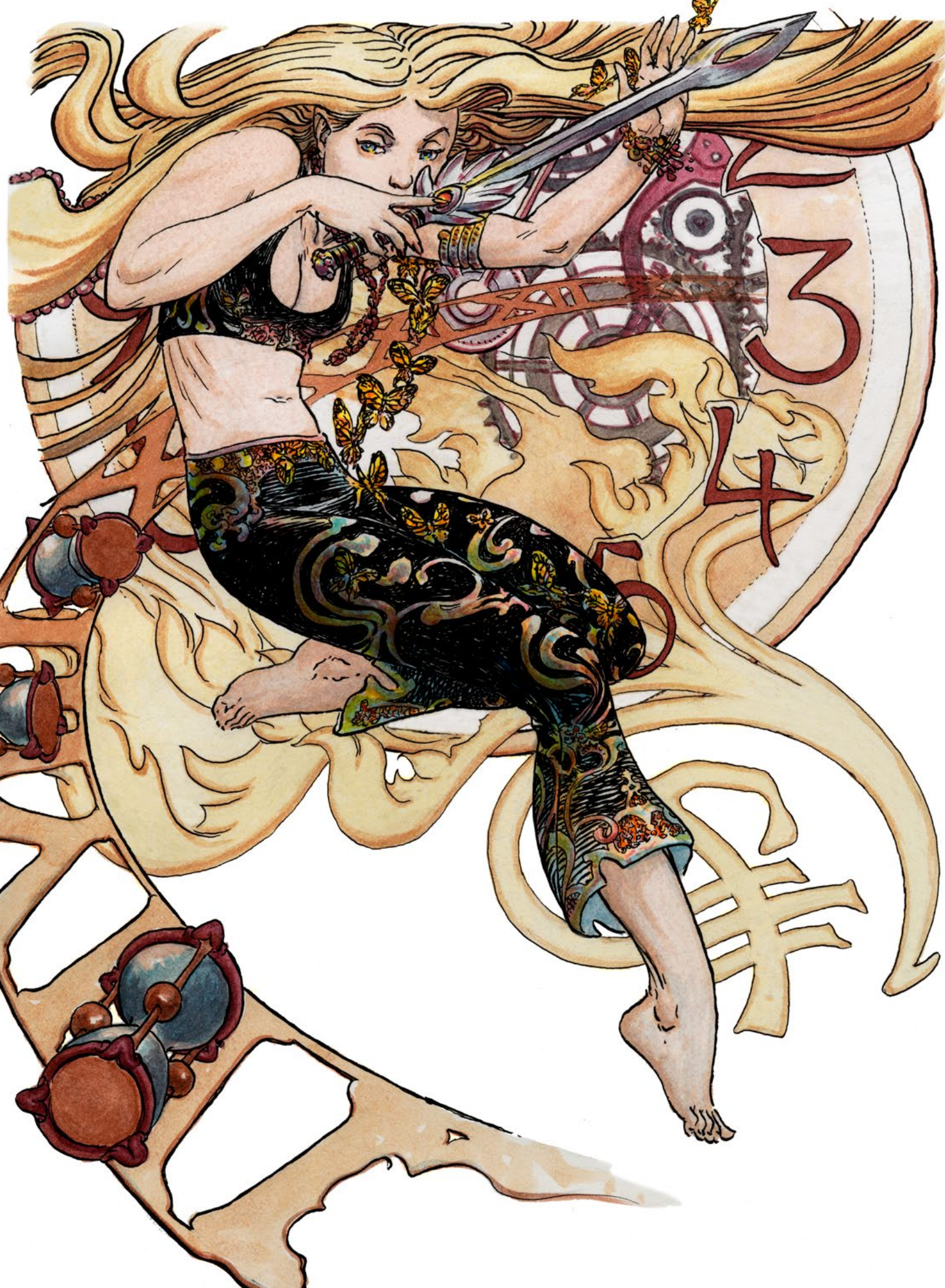
The sacred geometry of a mosque may hold one entity in place while the rhymes and rhythms of a local folk tune may ward off another. With enough time, such magicks bake into an area, keeping it safe until something breaks them. Breaks can be repaired, and the sometimes-literal demons can be banished if the magickal landscape is repaired quickly enough. Balmoral Associates specializes in such repairs.

In the Sleeper world, Balmoral Associates provides provenance research and authentication services. In the Awakened world, staffers investigate cases of broken wards, changed scriptures, and shifted ley lines that are causing havoc. Cases are prioritized based on ease of response, threat to Sleepers, and of course payment which may take a variety of forms.

Balmoral Associates is a tense mix of Disparates, Technocrats, and Traditionalists with some combination of scholarship, technology, and native knowledge in the magickal problem. The group generally has no more than four Awakened or Enlightened associates on their payroll at once but others can be brought on for exceptional cases.

Recent cases have included repopularizing a Cornish folk tune used to bind a malevolent Umbrood, restoring the frieze of an Iranian temple containing parts of the True Name of a lost guardian lamassu, and repairing an ill-maintained nilkotsudll holding some angsty wraiths.





CULT OF ECSTASY

(The Sahajīya)

Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river which sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire which consumes me, but I am the fire.

— Jorge Luis Borges, “A New Refutation of Time”

Disciplines of Madness



Life loves her little ironies. The irony of seers blindsided by a future they helped create seems more delicious than usual. For centuries, the Ecstatic Tradition has prided itself on riding the cusp of cultural transformation and personal experience — of “seeing ahead,” as it were. For all their vision, however, the inherent contradictions of an “ecstatic tradition” appear to have escaped many of that group’s members. Now, as the Consensus shifts faster than even *these* time-spanning mages can perceive, the Cult finds itself caught in a crisis of identity the likes of which its more “traditional” members could not have foreseen.

Despite preconceptions, “the sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll mages” were always more than they seemed to be. The group’s distaste for hierarchy, formality, and caste reinforced the Cult’s image as stoner weirdos when compared to their Hermetic and Celestial comrades. Yet the Traditions themselves (at least as

Ecstatics tell the tale) would not exist if not for the seer Sh’zar. That legacy earned the Cult grudging respect among its peers. The Arts they pursued, though disreputable and often sinister, had ancient pedigrees, too. Even the most hidebound wizard had to accept the efficacy of tantric metaphysics and Taoist alchemy. In the shadows of an “Age of Reason,” Ecstatics became the mad poets and rebel voices where art and magick merged; from the blood and ashes of two World Wars, the Cult emerged triumphant, blasting gospels of sex and liberation and magick to the Masses.

And then?

Ecstasy breeds excess. Excess brings backlash, and Ecstatics haven’t always been careful about where their Arts and passions led. Although the current era validates this Tradition’s social and metaphysical ideals, the ways in which its members have gone about pursuing those ideals can be... well, *careless*. To fulfill the promise of its principles, the Ecstatic Tradition must confront its excesses, move outside its comfort zones, and embrace a future that few seers could have foretold.

History: A Heritage of Heresy

Welcome to the Cult of Ecstasy.

Oh, they haven’t been called that name for long. The name’s recent and it’s already obsolete. Since the group’s inception, they’ve also been known as *Seers of Chronos* and *Sahajīya*, or “the Naturals” — a name now favored within this “Cult.” Before the

group assembled, its practitioners were shamans and prophets, dervishes, *siddhus*, and saints of sin. They’ve been the mad dogs outside the temple since before those temples existed. According to certain theories, human consciousness began with apes eating psychotropic mushrooms, and while those theories are

contentious even within the Cult, the ancient pedigree of Ecstatic practices is beyond dispute.

It's a hard road with many casualties. People tend to get stuck along that road, either stepping back out of fear, succumbing to their so-called "vices," or becoming monsters who forget the core ethic of the Sahajiya Path: *Your Enlightenment must not become other people's burden*. To violate another person's Nine Sacred Passions — the core of their sacred and eternal Self — is to risk destroying their capacity to Awaken, essentially dooming them to a stunted, endless Sleep.

In terms of the Metaphysic Trinity, Stasis without Dynamism leads to Entropy. By such reasoning, human existence needs occasional shake-ups. Historically, those shake-ups come from the fringes of society. Innately disreputable, even heretical, dynamic arts and philosophies defy the social order, rattle foundations, and terrify the "proper" folk. Pursuits bred "outside of stasis" are the province of misrule: outlaw Arts with outlaw practitioners.

To an Ecstatic mage, magick is an innate human birthright. The potential for magick sits dormant in every human spirit. We're attuned to realities beyond the limited view most folk perceive. As William Blake — an Ecstatic if there ever was one — said, "If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear... as it is: infinite." Most people, for whatever reason, go through life with their perception doors shut tight. Ecstatic practices aim to open those doors and keep them open afterward. Some methods within those practices are soft and subtle: meditation, music, calm reflection, sweet sensations; others tend toward extremes: exertions, ordeals, terror, pain. Ideally, an Ecstatic adjusts methods whenever necessary. Routines, after all, let the doors slip shut again. What other people fear, Ecstatics embrace. In the eyes of many people, then, an Ecstatic mage seems fearless and yet fearsome — a person who lives in an endless *now* of infinite sensation.

The Dance of Memory

Although time is an Ecstatic specialty, any Master of that Art can tell you how subjective our perceptions of time can be. Thus, "history" deepens into myth among those who understand time best. Besides, time itself, as we understand the concept, is a modern innovation, bound by mechanical clocks and written schedules. The further back in time you go, the more you realize that hours and years become a blur of sensations, not dry arrays of facts. Ecstatics, therefore, view their history through impressions, not chronicles. Each practitioner becomes a living vessel of that history; the "Cult" which unites them is a convenient fiction held for other people's benefit.

That Cult's roots run deep: Tripping mystics under star-washed skies. Hunter-priests draped in skins and bones.

Artists painting beasts across the bowels of the earth, droning chants while breathing psychotropic smoke. Wounded healers and holy fools. Naked terrors dancing through the heart of night. In the earliest ages, clans depend upon such mad wisdom. Their Ecstatic seers divine the spirits' will and call prey to the hunter's spears. Shamanic healers tend the scars and illness of their people. Each tribe needs steady hands behind its weapons, steady minds to guide its crafts, and wild hearts to see where other folk cannot. In the Old Days, this is common sense. No one is worthless. Everyone tends the fire in their own ways.

Things change, though, with the rise of farms and cities and kings. Priests and scriptures replace the wisdom of the heart. Gods of madness become demons of the marketplace. Crops demand consistency. Trade demands conformity. Sex becomes a crime. Wars replace the hunt. The Path of Ecstasy leads toward the province of outlaws. Shame displaces pleasure. The hearts of men freeze still.

Even so, nights echo with Pan-flutes and Coyote-cries.

There *are* places for ecstasy in the settled lands: revels and theatres and mystery rites. Lessons taught in secret. Gods honored in forbidden temples. The witch's cabin; the hermit's den. Priests and kings and common folk pay homage to mad prophets and wounded healers, but rarely while watched and seldom without consequences. Vines of Ecstasy wind through the foundations of Empire and the borders of propriety — hacked and pruned and occasionally burnt.

Until the Seer.

Sh'zar, they call him. It means nothing and yet everything. His past is morning's dew; his future is evening's mist. The Seer gathers kindred souls in service of this prophet's quest: To stave off oblivion through riding the *Lakashim* — an immortal Life-Force pulsating through all things and times and possibilities. To nurture rather than indulge. To safeguard the human spirit from the encroaching wheels of Empire. Sh'zar envisions a new Ecstatic Path grown from the seeds of ancient ways. Where such people once guided and healed their tribes, this new tradition would guide and heal humanity as whole.

That prophecy, though, proves flawed.

Behold a Convocation

The Seer gathers 23 Masters of Sublime Arts from throughout the known world. Three of them become his *Divyas*: inspired acolytes who help him forge this Path. Three others return to their own people; from their efforts, the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions forms. When the Grand Convocation begins in 1457 CE, over 500 Ecstatics converge from every zone of human habitation. Though often contentious and occasionally feared, these devotees

eventually agree to uphold the *Code of Ananda*: 10 Tenets of guidance, responsibility, compassion, and the sanctity of bliss. Their fellowship — dubbed the *Seers of Chronos* by Hermetic lorekeepers but known amongst themselves as *Sahajiya* or *Ekstatikoi* — earns a place among the Nine Traditions, one it holds to the present day.

Sh'zar's vision is heroic. Sh'zar's people are...well, *people*. The Seer's hand-picked representative fails to foresee the destruction of the Council's initial decree, and Sh'zar himself dies trying to bring that Divya back into the fold. Although many *Ekstatikoi* uphold the Code of Ananda, others use it as a pretext for indulgence. The Tradition withstands witch-hunts, religious wars, imperial expansions, and internal dissents; that survival, though, is tenuous. Once again, Ecstatics retreat to the shadows of their respective cultures, sometimes (as with *Los Sabios Locos*, "the Crazy Wise Ones") waging guerilla war against colonial oppressors. Others glut themselves on the spoils of those empires, building libertine dens from profits gained through slavery, or poaching sacred practices from the people they destroy. Devotees of Sh'zar's ideals uphold their Code; devotees of sensation for its own sake drift among the cracks of Victorian-era society. Romantics, Bohemians, Decadents, Satanics, Sadeans, Pre-Raphaelites, Neo-Pagans, Aghoris, fakirs, Flagellants, Spiritualists, naturists and ascetics and anarchists and other rebellious souls all embrace ecstatic arts and practitioners, both Enlightened and otherwise. By 1867, the Seers of Sh'zar's vision have become the *Cult of Bacchus*: a loose confederation of intoxicated rogues.

It's said that Sh'zar himself returns to set things right. Appearing in a cloud of rippling power, he reminds a gathering of Cultists that Joy is a stronger passion than Hate. Those who have strayed, he punishes; those who uphold the Code, he rewards. So doing, the Seer vanishes, perhaps until future events demand his reappearance. To mark this visitation, the Cult of Bacchus becomes the Cult of Ecstasy.

Electric Wizards

Ironically, this primordial Tradition achieves its greatest triumphs through technology. As waves of innovations — electric power, mass printing and distribution, recording technologies, radio, film, telephones, and more — wash across the modern age, hidden ideas and subversive arts become cultural phenomena. The rebellious *fin de siècle* which bridges the 19th and 20th centuries brings with it a swell of irreverent yet appealing media. Chants of slavery bloom into the soundtrack of this age. Blues, jazz, reggae, and the irresistible tides of rock, hip-hop, and electronic pop music spread ecstasy through the Masses. Mystic practices and bizarre perversions flow from the gutters to the mainstream. That surge mingles ancient mysteries with novel synergies. Meanwhile, the bodies, minds, and

spirits battered by global warfare seek answers in the void of reason. A deranged age demands deranged solutions. The most destructive war in human history (a war that divides Traditions and Technocracy alike) settles into a nuclear stalemate slashed with bloody "little" conflicts. Africa breaks colonial chains. Asia boils with nuke-shadowed transformations. South America and the Middle East struggle with the legacies of European conquest while the industrial world goes mad. Caught between implacable divides, humanity seeks solutions.

For a time, the Cult seems to hold the answers.

The 1960s herald both the rise and fall of the Cult's supremacy. While the Awakened status of luminaries like Hendrix, Morrison, Bowie, Joplin, King, Warhol, Jagger, Harrison, Leary, Page, Moog, LaVey, Jinx Dawson, Kenneth Anger, Miles Davis, Charles Manson, and so on *ad infinitum* may be debatable, their impact on society is not. In darkness, light, and all shades in between, they bring ecstasy to the Masses on a level never seen before. Doors of perception get kicked inside out. The role of the Ecstatic Tradition in this era is obvious to everyone who knows that group exists.

And then?

Disaster.

Did they dare too much? Push too far? Open too many minds that weren't ready for infinity? Who knows? Perhaps the Masses simply aren't meant to see so far. A Summer of Love becomes the blood on Kent State pavement, the streets of Detroit, and the walls of Hollywood. The Cult blames the Technocracy, of course, but despite the hand played by the Syndicate in the commercialization of mass media, Ecstatic mages deserve more guilt than they'll admit. Sh'zar's fourth Tenet asserts that "Some minds rest best Asleep." The tides of heroin and STDs, sexual predation and selfishness which sweep across the world in subsequent decades suggest the old boy was right.

Good things emerge from the ruins of that era: spiritual and social consciousness, a surge toward magic and fantasy that hasn't faded since, a disruption of technological malaise, and some truly stunning tunes. Like the proverbial djinni, Ecstatic Arts cannot be shoved back and stoppered up. Although the Cult's fellow Traditions begrudge the "stupid dirty hippies" of that group, an honest Hermetic admits that two generations of would-be wizards have been *very* good to his Tradition.

Better still, Ecstatics themselves have taken a hard and often uncomfortable look at their reflection. Although the Code and other ethics clearly forbid a careless approach to their Arts, their Tradition has sheltered — often elevated — more than its share of parasites. As attitudes shift among Masses and mages alike, the Naturals assail their own group's

stasis. The poetic yet archaic Code gives way to clearer and more contemporary rules. The sinister *Cult* shifts toward the holistic *Sahajiya*. Selfish license pales in comparison to shattering social chains. In a world changing faster than any

eye can follow, the Arts of Ecstasy blaze with fresh purpose and vibrant urgency.

From caves to computers, the Path of Ecstasy endures. Perhaps it might yet save this world.

Current Events

Given the choose-your-own-metaplot nature of *Mage 20*, specific details regarding Ecstatic affairs will depend on the metaplot favored by your group. Certain elements, however, can be considered canon:

Reflection and Reform

This newer breed of *Sahajiya* is, for the most part, socially aware and furious. To them, strictures of identity and culture are limits worth destroying. Social media provides a wider awareness of the world at large, and a larger canvas for one's place within it, too. Compassionate malcontents that they are, many Ecstatics rally against injustice the way they rallied in the Sixties against war.

To the chagrin of certain long-term Ecstatics, this fury turns, at times, against the sexism, privilege, appropriations, and other careless behaviors that often mark the *Cult*'s more hedonistic aspects. Consent has been vital in this Tradition's ethics for almost as long that word has existed in the English language; still, the *definitions* of consent, who can and cannot consent, and the situations surrounding that consent have all changed considerably in recent decades. Getting high and having sex used to be a fixture of *Cult*

activities; historically speaking, initiation into Ecstatic cultures often occurred long before what's now considered legal age; *Cultists* intrigued by foreign ideas and practices often took what they wanted without regard for the people whose goods they stole; and then there's the age-old concept of "love spells" and other metaphysically enhanced seduction techniques. For millennia, such practices were common among magickal societies. Now, they're considered shady at best, and quite often far worse. There are reasons that Ecstatic mages, regardless of gender, have been considered dubious company. These days, over protests from certain *Cult* elders, the younger generation (backed by other elders) demands reflection and reform. Harmful traditions, the argument goes, were *always* harmful even when "traditional." Especially for a group dedicated to breaking patterns and going beyond your comfort zone, abandoning such practices is not only appropriate to the times but true to the spirit of the group itself.

(For more details about these topics, see "Taking Other People's Stuff?" and "Gender, Sex, and Magick" in *The Book of Secrets*, pp. 290–292, and "Questions of Consent" in *How Do You DO That?* pp. 119–120.)

Factions and the Cult of Ecstasy

The primary philosophical divide in the *Sahajiya* is a two-sided affair. On one side stand the **Renewers** who are responsible for updating the Code of Ananda, pushing for the name change, and reframing the Tradition's practices to be more respectful of others. Opposing them are the **Revelry**, who stand in resistance to these changes. The Revelry prefers to keep the party rolling, and anyone who can't handle their high is their own problem. This is a bitter divide that could well split the Tradition, though the Renewers are the larger of the two camps. While most *Sahajiya* are individualistic, choosing their side based on personal belief above previous alliances, the existing factions tend to flock to one side or the other as a group.

The Renewers include the **Children's Crusade**, the **Cult of Acceptance**, the **Dissonance Society**, **Erzuli Jingo**, the **Fellowship of Pan** (*sans* the **Maenads**), the **Joybringers**, **K'an Lu**, **Los Sabios Locos**, **Los Sangradores**, the **Silver Bridges**, and the **Vratyas**.

The Revelry includes the **Dissonance Society**, **Hagalaz**, **Ka'a**, **Klubwerks**, the **Khlysty Flagellants**, **Studiosi**, and **Umilyenye**.

Both groups hold a vested interest in purging *barabbi*. The restructuring of the Code of Ananda coupled with efforts to scrub the Tradition clean of Nephandic influence resulted in the expulsion or destruction of the **Aghoris**, **Acharne**, and the **Maenads** in addition to extreme members of the other factions.

Wired Ecstasy

Ecstatics have always been subversive outsiders. In the current age, however, a gender-rebel hacktivist is far more subversive and rebellious than a rich rock star with teenage girlfriends. While sex, drugs, and music have their place within Ecstatic Arts, a 21st-century practitioner is more likely to find transcendence in her computer than in her bong.

Like many mystics of their generation, these “tech-Ecstatics” reject the notion that science and magick are opposed. Instead, they use whichever tools work best for them: electronic musical instruments, smart drugs, social media, scientific workout techniques, cybernetic enhancements, gene therapy – whatever it takes to break the patterns that bind their potential. Given new tools and language through which to express their quest for something *more*, growing numbers of Ecstatics embrace transhuman and post-human philosophies (*The Book of Secrets*, pp. 293–294). Time, gender, physical form, social constrictions—if they’re all illusions to begin with, then there’s no reason *not* to remake them. Although many Ecstatics favor anarcho-primitivism instead, only Etherites and Mercurians, among Tradition mages, can rival Ecstatics in their enthusiasm for metahuman tech.

For some Ecstatics, this potential for “wired” transcendence encourages isolation; others, though, expand connection to previously impossible degrees. A pre-industrial Ecstatic might become a hermit; a wired one seeks community online; the *sort* of community, as usual, depends on what that person seeks and where she finds it. A person looking for kindred spirits can find them in all kinds of places.

Cult Out, Sahajīya In

In a popular (if contentious) move, this Tradition will likely change its name. If you wish, it may have changed already. The smarmy, pot-fogged label *Cult* doesn’t sit well with many Ecstatics, especially not ones who stress a deeper and more serious approach. Considering that the Tradition has changed its name several times since the Convocation, and that breaking old patterns is literally what *ecstasy* means, that shift suits the nature (so to speak) of the Tradition.

Not everyone agrees, of course. Especially since the new/old name brings a shift in intentions, too, some entrenched Ecstatics consider it “just more Social Justice bullshit.” A fair-sized contingent of sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll types still exists, and some of them prefer the wild ways. Their rivals argue that such attitudes are exactly what the Cult (under any name) was created to destroy; in the end, though, people are still people, and some folks can be stubborn as fuck.

The number of those people, the degree of their stubbornness, and the effects of that schism in Ecstatic ranks is up to your group and Storyteller to decide.



The Updated Code of Ananda

History is vital, especially when you're a vessel of that history. Even so, a Code transcribed 600 years ago sounds meaningless now, even if its core principles have not changed. Poetic metaphors leave lots of room for interpretation, too; some of those interpretations can excuse ugly deeds. And so — amidst considerable debate — the Ecstatic Tradition updates the 10 Tenets of its Code to suit 21st century concerns and phraseology.

The new Code is as follows, with commentary added:

I. Don't be a Fucking Asshole

This summation of the Code is now considered Ecstasy's First Rule. Although it shifts Sh'zar's first Tenet to the #2 slot, five centuries of assholery put this rule at the top of the list. The use of *fucking* initially raises some hackles among old-school magi; after debate, however, that word's inclusion gets voted in by unanimous consent. As noted by that inclusion's champion, Cassiopea Dracarys: "The word 'Fucking' is necessary here, not only for linguistic and rhetorical emphasis but because so *many* Cultists, when fucking, are such *assholes*."

2. We're All Miraculous. Respect That Miracle

Sh'zar's first and most vital teaching reminds Ecstatics of the ultimate core of their philosophy: The miraculous nature of Creation in each aspect. The Tenet's use of *all* undercuts a mage's ego, too; from the lowliest Sleeper to the most sublime Archmaster, from a nugget of gold to a pile of shit, *all* of Creation is a miracle, and so is worthy of respect.

3. When Someone's Sleeping, Let Them Sleep

This update of Tenet IV receives greater emphasis thanks to the failures of the Sixties and the behavior of predatory Ecstatics. A pupil, paramour, or other subject of potential Awakening *must* consent beforehand. No dosing, no tricks, no "good intentions" with traumatic results. Some Sahajiya call this "the Blue Pill Rule." If a Sleeper wishes to remain Asleep, no Ecstatic has the right to overrule that wish.

4. Other People's Passions are Not Your Playground (Don't Take - Ask)

Often stated as "*Do Not Rape—EVER!*" this rule addresses the Cult's long history of "take first and maybe ask later if you feel like it." Although the original Code and the teachings of Sh'zar make plain his feelings about rape, the nebulous definitions of that word (plus certain cultural traditions which qualify as rape) necessitated clear and unambiguous language in the updated Code.

Beyond sexual exploitation, this Tenet extends to the emotional and social fallout of Ecstatic carelessness, too — an element unaddressed by Cult leadership until now. As this rule's corollary makes clear, consent of all kinds is essential to the Code.

5. Other People's Treasures are Not Your Toys (Again, Ask)

Added in light of the widespread looting of ancestral traditions by imperial occultists, this Tenet stresses both the element of theft and the element of respect in its emphasis of *treasures* over *toys*. As one might expect, this proves to be a *very* contentious rule. Amidst the tens of thousands of words of debate on the topic, however, a common (though not universal) clarification emerges: *If a practice calls to you from outside your cultural experience, ask respectfully if you can share in it, and honor the answer if that answer is No. If the answer is Yes, then respect that practice and the people that it came from. Don't assume it belongs to you by right.*

As with the previous edict, consent must be asked, assent must be given, and refusal must be honored. In the words of Mistress Sirena, "The road to Yes leads through the acceptance of No."

6. Your Scars/Impediments Do Not Define you

Many Ecstatics have survived deep trauma. Lee Ann Millner, the sponsor of this revision, is living proof of its importance. Wounded healers have followed this Path since the dawn of humanity, and this Tenet upholds that legacy while reminding Sahajiya that they're not prisoners of fate or circumstance.

The alternate reading on this update of Tenet IX finds favor among disability advocates. Under this interpretation, *impediments* refers to anything from inborn conditions to physical or mental disabilities not limited to trauma. The wording is a matter of personal taste; some Naturals consider *scars* to be more poetic (especially for survivors), while others prefer the inclusive *impediments* instead. In a group opposed to rigid patterns, either interpretation works. Its point stands either way.

7. Enlightenment is No Excuse

Ecstatics are dangerous people by default, devotees of sensation and upheaval, notorious followers of gods like Kali, Pan, Coyote, Loki, the Monkey King, and Lucifer. Their Path involves derangements of body, psyche, and time itself. Like all mage factions — in some ways, more than most — this Tradition has a problem with members who justify atrocities with the argument, "But I'm *better* than the Masses!" This Tenet dismantles that excuse. The Council, of course, already has provisions for handling Wizards Gone Wild. (See "Crimes"

in *The Book of Secrets*, pp. 214–215). Because this Tradition has such a sordid history, however, this summation of old Tenets II, III, VI, and VII gets added to the Code.

8. Violence Has Consequences Even You Cannot Foresee

A summation of Tenets II and VIII, this update underscores the Tradition’s prophetic gifts in its observation about the unpredictable effects of violence and trauma. Where the original Tenets warned Ecstatics about anger and accountability, the new version drives home the unreliability of temporal perceptions and the long-term (often hidden) fallout from violent acts. For a group that values passion the way they do, it’s vital to find ways around turning momentary urges into lasting harm.

9. Your Truth is Not All Truths

An expansion of Tenet V, this version emphasizes the unreliability of visions while also undercutting the philosophical *solipsism* that plagues mages who disappear too far up their own asses. Extensive commentary about this Tenet also points out how culture, class, gender, and so forth can blind even the most supposedly enlightened visionaries. Although the relativism of this edict feels potentially hazardous in an era glutted with “alternate facts,” the revision stands intact until someone figures out a better way of saying, “*Don’t get too full of yourself even if you can see possible futures.*”

10. This World is Terrible. Be Kind

Compassion may have been Sh’zar’s greatest gift. Council accounts, and legends of his final appearance, suggest that the element that bound so many otherwise unrelated practitioners together was his vision of Creation as an infinite yet interconnected miracle. That miracle, though, is dark and implacable. Lesser souls are often driven to despair, madness, or malignancy by the weight of that impossible darkness.

And yet, we endure. In the face of impossible obstacles, we survive and perhaps even thrive.

To witness that miracle in all its awful splendor is to court the Abyss. To transcend that fearsome gravity, compassion is essential. Compassion not only for one’s own self but also for the souls less favored than that self.

The original Code implies this element of compassion and kindness in Tenets I, III, VII, VIII, and IX. That theme, though, runs through all 10 Tenets of that Code. By replacing the original last Tenet’s theme of fear with the updated theme of compassion, the new Ecstatic generation faces the challenges of an interconnected world teetering toward annihilation. “So many forces,” says Lee Ann Millner, “keep

pushing us to hate each other. The most radical act in this world, then, is to be kind whenever possible.”

Future Fates

With so many elements in play, a *Mage* Storyteller has several dramatic options when the Ecstatic Tradition appears in 21st-century tales. Some of the larger ones include:

NHC: The New Horizon Council

Following the Avatar Storm and/or the fall of Horizon, the Council of Nine regroups in a smaller and more secretive fashion. The last 20 years have seen the resurgent Traditions solidify a New Horizon Council, based in New Zealand, whose leadership and goals focus on 21st-century concerns, not the addled grudges of ancient wizards who can’t even set foot in the modern world for long, much less understand this era and its people.

Within that NHC, the Sahajiya take the vanguard of diplomacy, outreach, and reform. Led by Lee Ann Millner, Ecstatics combine their longtime alliances to the Thanatoics, Kha’vadi, and Verbenae with a deepening connection to weird-science Etherites and hacktivist Adepts. While reformist Naturals push for more recognition of social justice both within and outside the Traditions’ ranks, Naturals who prefer spending time among the Masses spread their influence from Burner culture to the post-Occupy activism movements. Social media provides an infinite forum for Ecstatic proponents of radical ideas, trauma processing, wound-healing, and emotional support networks. Although few Ecstatics would hesitate to punch a Nazi, most would rather lock such a person in his own head and let him experience the pain caused by his misdeeds.

On the darker side of that coin, many Naturals embrace — even endorse — postmodern culture’s lunatic fringe. Conspiracy theories, anti-science campaigns, anarcho-primitivism and eco-fascism, New Age “wellness” cults, radical selfishness philosophies, privileged escapism, and other counterproductive movements fit all too closely with Ecstatic practices and paradigms. And while reformers try and tame the Cult’s hedonistic extremes, some Ecstatics continue to demand their freedom, whatever the cost might be. A handful, seduced by the intense potential of techno-Ecstatic media, divorce themselves completely from the rest of the world, living almost completely online or traveling from festival to festival in a vain refusal to deal with “Mundania” for any length of time. Whether this era’s Ecstatics tend more toward justice or indulgence depends largely on where the Storyteller plans to lead this Tradition. Given the chaos of our era in real life, things could go either way in *Mage*.

For more details about the New Horizon Council, see *Mage* 20 (pp. 145–147) and *The Book of Secrets* (pp. 212–222), as well as the other chapters in this book.

A Fallen Cult

Ecstatics love flipping tables. An exceptionally dark metaplot option presents the Cult not as compassionate hedonists but as ruthless corruptors posing behind a harmless hippie façade. In this case, the Code of Ananda is a smokescreen for intimate abuse under pretense of enlightenment. Behind that smokescreen, these “Naturals” act like Sadean libertines with world-rending powers. A few Sahajiya pursue a sincere version of their Path; the majority of them, though, have been “initiated into deeper mysteries” in which predation is the ultimate Enlightenment.

Perhaps the Cult finds itself torn between compassionate idealists and rampant sybarites — a war rich with potential nightmare fuel. Given this Tradition’s penchant for excess, and its talent for fucking with minds, lives, and time itself, that chronicle could play out like the acid-tripping spawn of Christopher Nolan banging Quentin Tarantino in Ken Russell’s living room.

The Book of the Fallen features a covert Ecstatic faction. Referred to as *Baphies* or *Goatkids*, these corruptors are essentially the Cult of Ecstasy gone very, very bad. Few mages have such vile possibilities as devotees of a Fallen Cult, and so this option would be Content Warning City even if the worst excesses occur offstage. For details, see **Mage** (p.

139), **The Book of the Fallen** (pp. 56–57, 76–79, 181–183, and 218–219), and **Technocracy: Reloaded** (pp. 221–222).

A Bridge Against the Dark

Despite the long antagonism between the Traditions and Technocracy, the true enemy of our era isn’t magick vs. technology — it’s survival vs. annihilation. And so, just as Lee Ann and John Courage use their shared history to bridge rivalries and join forces, so too the entire Cult and Council could strike an alliance with their longtime enemies in an effort to save their world together. This alliance might or might not involve Nephandic corruption of one or both factions and may or may not feature John and Lee Ann as the architects of that alliance. Whatever options the Storyteller prefers, a “bridge against darkness” chronicle pits its characters against the threat of looming oblivion. Traditional antagonists must put aside their arguments (for the moment, at least) and combine resources before humanity goes extinct.

For details and suggestions, see the Preludes of major **Mage** sourcebooks, the **Mage** rulebook’s entries for “Common Ground” and “The Mixed-Faction Chronicle” (pp. 349–354 and 378–379), **The Book of the Fallen** (pp. 217–221), and Unit 8 in **Technocracy: Reloaded** (pp. 219–227).

Notable Personalities



The roll call of reputed Ecstatics is as long and convoluted as “Cygnus XI: Book II: Hemispheres.” Whether or not they were formally initiated into the Cult, icons like Morrison, Joplin, Crowley, Bowie, Leary, and the indomitable Jimi Hendrix are inevitably mentioned when the subject of famous Ecstatics comes up in conversation. Although assertions that Lil Naz X, Lady Gaga, and Beyonce are members of a Satanic

Illuminati are clearly absurd, the idea that they’re Ecstatic mages doesn’t seem far-fetched at all. Under any name, this Tradition attracts charismatic iconoclasts.

These days, the more notable iconoclasts within Ecstatic ranks include:

Devika Kumari Shravana

“I refuse to become who you define me to be.” That’s a brave statement in general. Coming from a young woman raised among Untouchables, it’s the sort of remark that can get you killed. Descended from *Siddhis* — Yoruba captives brought to India by Portuguese slavers — and rumored to have been raised among the trash-collectors of Ankola, the

girl who would become one of the most outspoken mages of her Tradition had what must have been an exceedingly difficult youth. Devika herself does not speak of those days, saying only that she survived what many others did not. Her headstrong nature eventually led her to Goa, where she claims to have Awakened in the lap of Lakshmi as she lay dying of starvation. Taking the name “Little Goddess,” she accepted her patron’s role as the bringer of transformation, beauty, and joy.

That said, she’s no Manic Pixie Dream Girl. Pursuing her Path amidst the endless festival of Goa’s psytrance scene, Devika combines compassion for human suffering with annoyance at human trivialities. “If you’re going to play with my people’s sacred culture,” she often says, “then at least learn what my people endure.” Among Sleepers and Ecstatic mages alike, she champions people on the margins: servants, strangers, those who do the dirty jobs or who live off the scraps of wealthy folk. No “traditionalist” in a cultural sense, she’s as sharp to criticize “the old ways” as she is to dump on rave-scene foreigners. “Divinity shines in all of us,” is Devika’s creed. “The less you see Her among our delusions, the more present, in truth, She becomes.”

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Contrary

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina (Energizer Bunny) 5, Charisma (Inspirational) 5, Manipulation (Emotional Appeals) 5, Appearance 3, Perception (Uncanny Insight) 4, Intelligence (Deep Thoughts) 4, Wits (Street Survivor) 4

Abilities: Academics 1, Alertness 3, Athletics (Flow Arts) 4, Awareness 3, Belief Systems 2, Brawl 3, Carousing 3, Cosmology 1, Cultural Savvy (Taboos) 4, Crafts 3, Empathy (Subtle Cues) 4, Enigmas 3, Esoterica (Traditional Tantra & Yoga) 5, Etiquette (Subcultures) 4, Expression 3, Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Medicine 3, Meditation (Trance) 4, Melee 3, Politics 3, Research 2, Stealth (Blending into Shadows) 4, Streetwise (Street Politics) 5, Subterfuge (Sensing Deceptions) 5, Survival (Old-School Wisdom) 4, Technology 1

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Avatar 2, Contacts 3, Cult 2, Fame 1, Resources 3, Status 2

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 5 (Merit: *Too Tough to Die*)

Arete: 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 1, Forces 3, Life 3, Matter 2, Mind 4, Prime 3, Spirit 2, Time 2

Attacks/Powers: Though she can throw a punch (3/B), swing a club (5/B), or use a knife (4/L) if necessary, Devika favors talk when possible, and psychic attacks when pushed to violence.

Equipment: Devika learned to survive with the clothes on her back, and so carries little more these days than a pouch-heavy belt, some festival clothes, and a water bottle or two.

Image: A lean, long-haired, intense, and dark-skinned Afro-Indian woman in her early 20s, with dazzling charisma and an arresting gaze. She favors bright rave-festival garb but occasionally wears traditionally Maharashtrian clothing suitable for a young, unmarried woman of deliberately indeterminate caste. At 1.79 meters (5'9"), Devika seems even taller than she is, thanks to her graceful bearing and energetic presence. When she wants to disappear, however, she's very good at it. That's why she's still alive.

Roleplaying Notes: You are no one's plaything, pet, or slave. Ingratiating yourself with people is a survival skill enhanced by your dedication to Lakshmi's ways. That said, you have a temper, and while you prefer to slice offenders to ribbons with words alone, you're no stranger to blades and guns.

Focus: Through Lakshmi's guidance and presence in her life, Devika knows that *Creation's Divine and Alive*, and *Everything's an Illusion*, so as bad as things can become, *It's All Good — Have Faith!* Although her connection to Lakshmi involves God-Bonding, her primary practice combines Yoga and Tantra with a touch of Crazy Wisdom. As a street survivor, Devika uses herself as her instrument, focusing Effects through

dance and movement (yogic and tantric asanas), music, meditation, eye contact, language (Sanskrit), prayers, offerings, energy, and purity. Occasionally, she'll add intoxicants (drugs and poisons, food and drink) to that mix and can invest weapons with Prime energy if force is the only option.

Lee Ann Millner

"Those who have suffered," Patti Smith said, "understand suffering and thereby extend their hand." Lee Ann Millner, the Tradition's most prominent representative since the turn of the millennium, embodies Smith's observation. The fact that Millner's hand could be holding a tissue, a flower, or a knife reveals much about this element of the Cult. Abused horrendously during childhood, Lee Ann traded one cycle of abusers for another. According to rumors, she Awakened while blasting one abuser all over the walls of their apartment. A shadowy Good Samaritan extracted her from that situation and brought Lee Ann to a friend within the Cult. She entered the Tradition as a tortured, malnourished, drug-addicted wreck. She emerged as one of the most powerful Ecstatics of our age.

Despite her formidable mystick acumen, Lee Ann's greatest strength is her ruthless compassion. Living as she does in the endless instant of her life's many traumas and joys, this charismatic Master performs a delicate inner balance between the horrors she's endured and the gifts she's mined from them. From that fierce alchemy, Lee Ann forged a lover's heart with a warrior's arm. When necessary, she'll torture the torturers and kill the killers; when possible, she'll heal the wounded and admonish the strong. Always, even in the depths of the many hells she's encountered, Lee Ann seeks beauty, justice, and potential. As the Sahajiya remake their disreputable Cult, the group's Primus personifies the best aspirations of their Path.

Nature: Guardian

Demeanor: Romantic

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina (Tough) 4, Charisma (Inspirational) 5, Manipulation (Charm) 5, Appearance (Captivating) 4, Perception (Sharp Senses) 5, Intelligence (Creative) 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics (Folklore) 4, Alertness 3, Animal Kinship 3, Art 2, Athletics (Extreme Endurance) 5, Awareness (Weird Feelings) 5, Belief Systems (Esoterica) 5, Brawl 3, Carousing (Mystic Justifications) 4, Computer 3, Cosmology (Navigation) 4, Cultural Savvy 3, Crafts 2, Drive 2, Empathy (I Know What You Need) 4, Enigmas 3, Esoterica (T'ai Chi, Tantra, Yoga) 5, Etiquette (Subcultures) 4, Expression 3, Firearms 1, Intimidation 2, Investigation 4, Law 2, Lore (several) 3, Lucid Dreaming 3, Martial Arts (Blade Techniques) 4, Medicine (Alternative Medicine) 4, Meditation (Tantra, Trance) 5, Melee (Blades) 4, Occult (Mystick

Lore) 5, Politics 3, Research 3, Riding 2, Seduction (Subtle Moves) 4, Stealth (Concealment) 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Trust) 4, Survival (Old-School Wisdom) 5, Technology 3, Torture 3

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Avatar 4, Contacts 5, Destiny 4, Library 2, Node 4, Resources 4, Retainers 5, Sanctum 4, Status 5

Willpower: 10

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated (but see below)

Armor Rating: Normally 0, but she can use Life 3 to harden her skin, increase Strength and Stamina, and soak lethal damage.

Arete: 8

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 3, Forces 4, Life 5, Matter 2, Mind 5, Prime 5, Spirit, 4, Time 4

Attacks/Powers: Lee Ann generally fights with swords and knives (4 or 5/L), enchanted or at least infused with Quintessential energy to inflict aggravated damage. When desperate or furious, Lee Ann transforms herself into a **Shiva/Kali Murder Machine (How Do You DO That?** p. 69). Given the vast array of magicks at her command, however, she can attack and defend with elemental storms, Time-freeze snaps (as described in the **Mage Prelude**, p. XV), Entropic decay, Correspondence blindsides, and many other tactics besides.

Equipment: Depending on where you meet her, Lee Ann might bear anything from a hiking pack or a brace of blades to formal dress or nothing at all.

Image: Though she looks younger than her

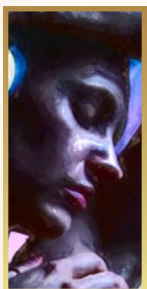
40-someodd years, Lee Ann has let maturity begin to season her hippie-chick façade. Even so, she retains her vibrant good looks and cheerful charisma, her penchant for loose, comfortable clothing, and her hallmark cornsilk hair. Under most circumstances, the Ecstatic Primus stands a lean-muscled 5'3" in her bare feet. Still tactile and sensual, Lee Ann resists her old habit of touching people until she knows whether they want to be touched.

Roleplaying Notes: You've learned to let bliss override horror. Like many Ecstatics, however, you experience past and present and slivers of the future in a constant state of Now, so that balance remains a challenge at times. The gravity of your position tempers your old exuberance. Rage at man's inhumanity pulls constantly at your sense of calm. Yet despite — in ways, because of what you've experienced — you're determined to help other people and bring joy, not more pain, to their world.

Focus: Lee Ann knows we live in *A World of Gods and Monsters*. In that world, *We are the Champions* and must *Break It Up and Transcend Your Limits* because *Creation is Divine and Alive* in all its best and worst aspects. Although her mastery allows her to work without instruments, she still focuses her Arts through Yoga, Tantra, Dominion, Crazy Wisdom, Medicine-Work, and a degree of Feralism. Meditation, energy, eye contact, incense (brews and concoctions), prayer, social domination, and sex and sensuality remain her primary instruments, with weapons, ordeals, and carefully employed drugs used when necessary.



Paradigm



Among Tradition mages, Ecstatics tend to be extremely diverse in their beliefs, practices, and instruments. The only paradigms uniting this individualistic Tradition involve the necessity of transcending limitations and the prohibition against forcing other people to do it with you. Beyond that, the Naturals pursue everything from vision quests to video games. So long as a practice or tool allows you to “break on through to the other side,” and doesn’t harm other people in the process, it’s valid in the eyes of the Cult.

Antinomianism and the Nightside

Antinomianism (detailed in **The Book of the Fallen**, p. 138) sits at the core of Ecstatic magick. That said, the Tradition emphasizes self-discipline over self-indulgence. Transgression, to an Ecstatic, is vital, so long as there’s a point to it and you don’t make it someone else’s problem. Most of the group’s rules and proscriptions deal with members who can’t (or won’t) take responsibility for the things they do in pursuit of Enlightenment. Because so many cultures and eras have different ideas about what that *means*, however, Ecstatic elders have their work cut out for them.

Especially brave and reckless Ecstatics walk the *Nightside*, too. Seeking wisdom in forbidden places, they delve into shadow work and favor disreputable people and practices. As explored in **The Book of the Fallen** (pp. 94–99), this is an especially precarious Path. That said, many people, Ecstatic and otherwise, have little choice about the matter; runaways, addicts, sex-workers, homeless people, survivors of trauma and abuse, and other folks on the margins of “respectability” (or shut off from it completely) exist in the *Nightside* by default. For them, pursuit of enlightenment may be the only thing that redeems an otherwise miserable existence. In this regard, the Cult often proves more accepting than other, more rarified Traditions. After all, many Ecstatic practices emerged from tabooed cultures and cultural taboos. It makes sense that Ecstatic mages would seek meaning behind things other people fear.

That said, personal accountability is a cornerstone of training among the Naturals. An Ecstatic practitioner who can’t (or won’t) control themselves is quickly asked to leave or be expelled and may well be punished – in extreme circumstances, terminally. For details, see “Crimes” and “Punishments” in **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 213–219).

Ecstatic Paradigms

Most focus elements associated with Ecstatic Arts have been covered in previous **Mage** books. Several particularly Ecstatic beliefs, practices, and instruments, however, are worth expanding upon here:

All is Now and Now is All

Everything exists at once. Separation is the lie we tell ourselves in order to exist in this illusory life. The trick to transcending our miserable existence in this life involves seeing time for the trap it is. Ancient people understood this fact, and they were essentially immortal if they could keep something else from destroying their physical form and returning their consciousness to the All. When we allow ourselves, though, to be trapped by calendars and clocks and other people’s schedules, we doom ourselves to prisons of decaying flesh and imprisoned souls. Time, age, mortality, form – they’re all a cosmic prank or shackle that confines who we truly *are*. Sure, it’s hard to break through the illusions that confine us. When you *do it*, though, you recognize that everything is limitless, connected, and eternal.

Easy to say yet difficult to live, this paradigm asserts that all elements we perceive as existence are false. The implacability of time is the biggest lie of all. There is no past, no present, no future. All is Now. Nothing else exists. Related to the paradigm *Everything’s an Illusion*, this model for reality views temporal mortality as a prison that consciousness is meant to escape. That prison might be imposed by outside forces; more likely, we impose it upon ourselves. We hold the key to that prison without realizing either one exists. Once we recognize that key, spot that lock, open that prison door, we realize that none of them were really there at all. The intrinsic paradox (and Paradox) of this belief, of course, is that you must accept the reality of time in order to escape it; otherwise, you remain bound by something you don’t believe exists.

If this sounds like an idea you must be stoned to understand, that’s probably because it is. According to folks who embrace this paradigm, entheogenic substances (see p. XX) set mortal consciousness free. Thus freed, you begin to see mortal confines for what they are: a trap in which infinity is held. Because we’re still stuck in that trap when the drugs wear off, however, it takes a lifetime (which is, of course, a paradox) of disciplined openness (another paradox) to slip free and realize we were/are All, and Infinite, all along. At which point, we transcend and stop existing in this trap at all.

Ascension, in this paradigm, involves letting go of everything: past, present, future, things, self, ego, possessions

— *everything*. Theoretically, a person in that state seems to disappear from within our prison because that person has transcended the illusions that confine us here. Conversely, according to some mystics, nothing changes externally at all — the change is on the inside. Such a person exists within the illusion but is not *trapped* in the illusion; as the saying goes, “Before enlightenment: chopping wood and carrying water; after enlightenment: chopping wood and carrying water.” The illusion has not changed, but the consciousness within it has.

Such transcendence, of course, is easier said than done. Few souls ever manage it. Although Ecstatics can wrap their metaphorical hands around those metaphorical keys and twist them in that metaphorical lock, time’s lock is rusty, and its prison is secure. Cultists tend to age slower than most mortals do (because age is an element of illusory time) and to perceive experience in a *then/now/when* cascade (because it is, isn’t it?). That said, they *do* age (which means they’re still trapped by time) and must mature (again, paradoxically) beyond the children they were to the children they can once again become. Not children of the flesh, but children of the universe, whose ultimate Reality is that “reality” as we know it doesn’t exist. Even though it *does*.

No wonder other mages find Ecstatics so infuriating.

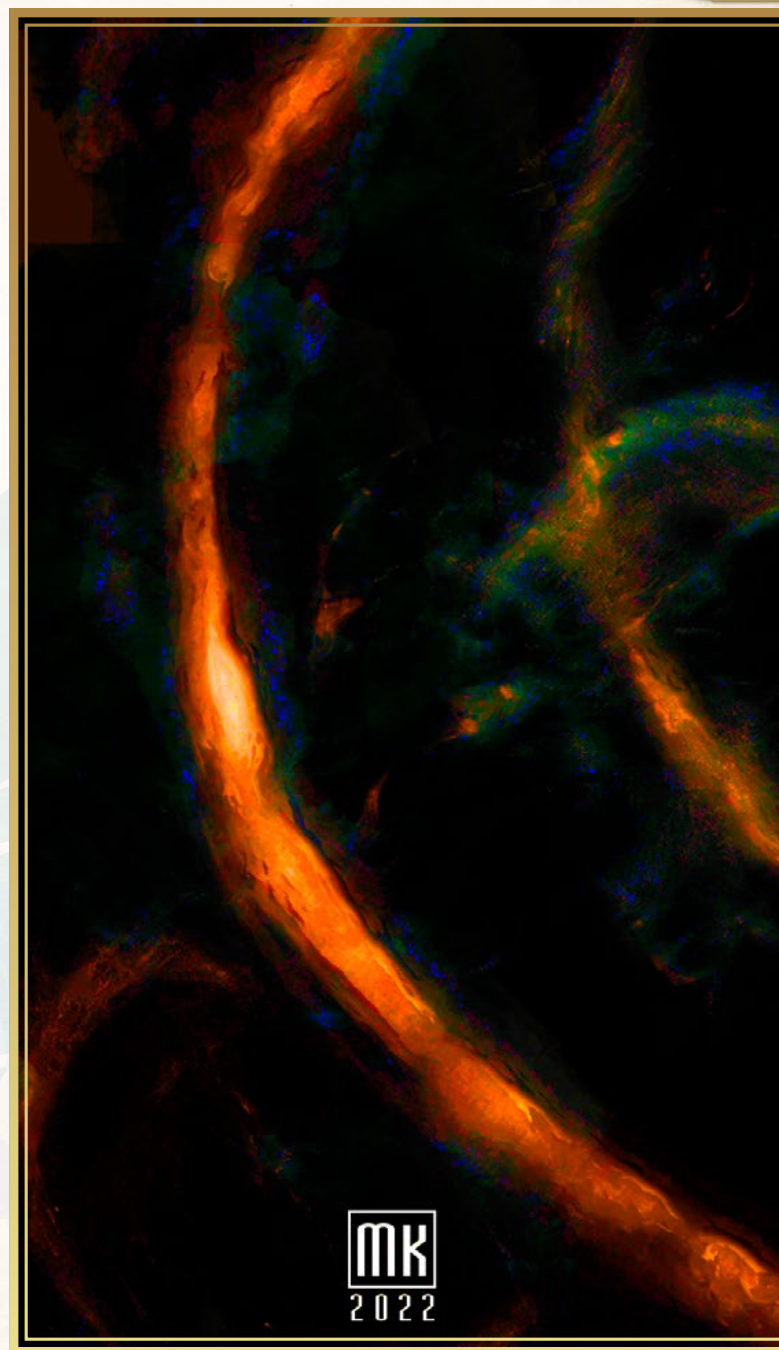
Especially when their temporal mastery suggests that paradigm isn’t *wrong*...

Associated Practices: Animalism, Chaos Magick, Crazy Wisdom, Psionics, Reality Hacking, Shamanism, Yoga

Break It Up

We embody cosmic forces. Those forces exist within a constant interplay of growth, stagnation, decline, and renewal. *What could be* becomes *What is*, which falls into *What was* before breaking down and becoming *What could be* again. Trouble is, we get so comfortable with *What is*, and we fear *What was*, and sometimes even *What could be*, so much that we silly mortals get stuck in ruts that drag us down until those forces grind us down whether we want them to or not. Because we have so much more power than most of us believe we have, those ruts can destroy us personally and doom the rest of our world with us. Therefore, *What is* must be given a good shake now and then, if only so we can control our powers over creation, existence, decline, and renewal. Otherwise, as so often happens, they control us instead.

This paradigm maintains that human consciousness is so powerful (perhaps uniquely so) that the rest of the world follows what we believe. Because so few people understand the responsibility involved in that power, however, or even believe we possess it, our power locks our world into place, leading to eventual decline unless we consciously, periodically break down what we’ve created and replace it with something



new. At its core, this paradigm is one of the central truths of **Mage**: Awakened beings *do* reshape Reality, and every human — perhaps every sentient being — might have the potential to do the same thing. In theory, this belief can empower folks to break toxic patterns and seek new and better horizons; in practice, though, this paradigm can also be incredibly egotistical and dangerous to the world at large... which is *also* a central truth of **Mage**. A mage who embraces this paradigm, then, must be incredibly careful with what she chooses to break down, and how she chooses to replace



it. Otherwise, that mage becomes an engine of destruction, not renewal. Even when she is careful, of course, things get broken, and people get hurt. What appears to one mage to be “the Ultimate Common Good” will inevitably be disaster to someone else.

No one said being a mage was easy.

Associated Practices: Bardism, Chaos Magick, Crazy Wisdom, Dominion, Gutter Magick, Invigoration, Psionics, Reality Hacking, Shamanism, Weird Science, Witchcraft

We are the Champions

Existence is often cruel. It’s up to us to be better than existence is. We’ve been blessed with uncommon powers and insights; our purpose in life, then, is to use those blessings to make this world a better place.

More of an ethical ideal than a metaphysical framework, this paradigm supplements other models of reality which address the source of the powers in question. That said, this ideal guides a mage toward compassionate decisions and shapes the form her magick

takes. Where paradigms like *Might is Right* assert a mage's will and whim, *We are the Champions* invokes a sense of responsibility for what a mage chooses to do with her abilities. Gifted with superior powers and vision, the Awakened have a responsibility to use them to help less-fortunate beings. It's an ancient idea, really, but an especially popular one in the age of superhero media. You could see this as the Spider-Man code or the ethic guiding Superman. And just as those heroes have a darker side, a mage asserting this paradigm might do terrible things for all the right reasons. It's codes like this, after all, that guide the Technocracy, too.

Associated Practices: Craftwork, Cybernetics, Dominion, Faith, God-Bonding, High Ritual Magick, Hypertech, Invigoration, Martial Arts, Medicine Work, Psionics, Reality Hacking, Weird Science

Ecstatic Practices

"Whatever works" is a common Ecstatic mantra. Among the many practices employed by this Tradition's mages, however, two are hallmarks of the Cult's approach.

Shadow Work

Aimed more at internal focus than on external results, shadow work involves delving into the hidden and repressed elements of the human psyche. Internally, this practice nurtures self-knowledge, explores suppressed impulses and trauma-scars, confronts fears, challenges restraints, accepts *all* elements of one's self (not merely the desirable ones), and works toward integrating a whole self rather than putting up interior and exterior façades. Externally, the practice helps a practitioner recognize repressed elements in other people, spot social dynamics of repression and expression, possibly exploit those trends (or perhaps to heal them), employ archetypal characters and behaviors that represent the shadow side of individuals and societies (playing the trickster, for example, or expressing things other people avoid expressing themselves), and use "sinister" props, tropes, arguments, and rituals in order to set the social shadow free.

If that later part sounds ominous, it's because Nephandi and other predators use social shadow work that way all the time.

Named for Carl Jung's concept of the shadow, this practice is far older than modern psychology. Akashayana, Dreamspeakers, and Verbenae use such techniques, and the *antinomian praxis* of Hermetic training employs them too. The Cult, however, delves further into shadow work than reputable mages dare to go. The Greek *Eleusinian Mysteries* deal with Underworld journeys that epitomize internal as well as external shadows, and the Hindu *Aghoris* (some of whom joined the Ecstatic Tradition) take their name from the fearlessness with which they confront taboos. It's possible, of course, to explore the shadow without going full-blown criminal. Moderation, though, is rarely an Ecstatic trait, and so many Cultists dance a thin line over the Abyss.

For details about Jung's shadow, antinomianism, and the Aghori Path, see **The Book of the Fallen**, pp. 96–97, 117, 138, and 145–146.

Associated Paradigms: *A World of Gods and Monsters, Break It Up, Consciousness is the Only True Reality, Divine Order and Earthly Chaos, Embrace the Threshold, Everything is Chaos, Everything's an Illusion, Might is Right, One-Way Trip to Oblivion, Transcend Your Limits, We are Meant to be Wild, We are NOT Men*, and the paradigms explored in **The Book of the Fallen** (pp. 131–138).

Associated Abilities: Art, Carousing, Empathy, Psychology/Psychoanalysis, Seduction, Streetwise, Subterfuge, Vice

Common Instruments: Artwork (as a vocation, and for exploration and reflection of inner processing), blood and fluids, body modification, brews and concoctions, drugs and poisons, eye contact ("the eye"), fashion ("dark" clothing), food and drink, group rites, knots and ropes (as art, for bondage, and as a symbol of unraveling the Gordian knot), meditation, money and wealth, music, offerings and sacrifices (especially to "crossroads" entities), ordeals and exertions ("running with the devil"), sex and sensuality, social domination, symbols, thought-forms, toys, transgression, tricks and illusions, voice and vocalizations, weapons, writings (see artwork, above). Modern shadow work usually features internet activity, too. Extreme shadow work might include cannibalism, torment, and other fucked-up shit.

Tantra

Likewise mentioned in **The Book of the Fallen**, Tantra is often associated with what Victorian occultists dubbed "the Left-Hand Path." A complex weave of Hindu and Buddhist practices (and reputedly practices that predate both creeds), Tantra presents a controversial toolkit of internal and external disciplines aimed at uniting the practitioner, their partners, and the world at large with the sacred truth of Creation. This toolkit, whose various translations ("loom," "weave," "unity," etc.) recall **Mage's** metaphor of the Tapestry, has been incorporated (some would say, appropriated) into many metaphysical practices. Yoga, martial arts, High Ritual, Taoist alchemy, modern witchcraft, and some weird sciences feature elements of Tantra.

In the religious tradition of *Kaula*, the veneration of Shiva and Shakti, Tantra can be regarded as two related paths: the austere *Daksinamarga* ("Right-Hand" practice of devotion, honor, and orthodox behavior) and the earthy *Vamamarga* ("Left-Hand" practice of pleasure, love, and joyful experience). Both involve extensive meditation and discipline; the latter, though, attracts people who prefer hedonism and so winds up watered down or outright perverted into practices geared more toward indulgence than toward unity. Ecstatic mages can pursue either one; *Vamamarga*, of course, is far more popular. That popularity spawned what's often called "western Tantra":

A bag of sexual tricks bearing little, if any, resemblance to Hindu sacred discipline. Ecstatic mages love this practice, too.

Tantra goes far deeper than a game book can explore. From a roleplaying standpoint, most **Mage** characters probably favor western Tantra. As a focus practice, this pursuit includes physical asanas; energy-sharing; ritual invocations of Shiva, Shakti, and other Hindu divinities; refinements of physical and mental discipline; study of Tantric sutras and *yantras* (designs); temporary or enduring partnerships with fellow practitioners; and a deep appreciation for food, drink, sexuality, and other sensual pursuits. Despite appearances, this hedonism aims to unite the mortal form with divine essence. Sensuality, in Vamamarga, becomes sacrament. A Tantric devotee, ideally, prays best through experiencing life.

For further information about Left- and Right-Hand Paths, see **Mage** (p. 574); for a darker take on Vamamarga Tantra, see **The Book of the Fallen** (pp. 145–146).

Associated Paradigms: *All is Now and Now is All, All Power Comes from Gods, Ancient Wisdom is the Key, A World of Gods and Monsters, Creation's Divine and Alive, Divine Order and Earthly Chaos, Everything's an Illusion, It's All Good – Have Faith, We're All Gods in Disguise*

Associated Abilities: Athletics, Cultural Savvy, Empathy, Esoterica, Meditation, Seduction

Common Instruments: Artwork (yantras and other designs), blood and fluids, bodywork (touch, massage, snuggling), bones and remains (especially among Aghori), brews and concoctions, drugs and poisons, eye contact (essential to Tantric connections), fashion (beautiful and sensual clothing, or near- or total nudity), food and drink (including foods prohibited in orthodox practices), group rites (partnership's vital to tantra), meditation (especially on sensation), music, offerings and sacrifices, ordeals and exertions (intricate asanas, orgasm delay and denial), prayer, sex and sensuality, social domination, transgression, voice and vocalizations (chants, ululations, orgasmic cries), weapons (especially when devoted to Shiva or Kali), writings (sutras, personal reflections). Aghori Vamamarga reputedly includes body modification, cannibalism, torment, and – in its darkest forms – violation.

Ecstatic Instruments

The preceding section covers most Ecstatic tools. Two, however, merit special attention:

Entheogens

Roughly translated from Greek, *entheogen* means “to bring out the god in you.” While mages employ drugs for many purposes, Ecstatics use *certain* drugs for specific ritual goals. Anyone can drop acid and maybe gain some insight; entheogenic usage involves ritual, prayer, sacred intentions,

personal discipline, and rites of preparation and purification for both the substance and the person who ingests it.

As a metaphysical instrument, this process adds prayer, ordeals, and often group rites to the act of ingesting a drug. It's more like a vision quest (**Mage 20**, p. 600) than like smoking a joint, and although entheogenic compounds *can* be prepared in advance and taken on the fly, intention and discipline are essential to the proper use of this instrument. The resulting trip typically involves religious visions, intense sensations, and a deep feeling of spiritual connection. Afterward, the practitioner crashes hard, physically and mentally processing the visions, Creation, and the practitioner's place in both.

For the game effects of drugs, see **Mage 20**, pp. 441–444). Entheogenic substances could be considered “awakened” in the sense described in that section, with a Toxin Rating of 2. Traditional entheogens are considered psychedelic drugs (p. 444), but other substances – including mage-crafted concoctions – could be prepared for such purposes.

Sigils

Popularized by art-occultist Austin Osman Spare, the Chaos Magick approach to sigils inverts their traditional applications in High Ritual Arts. Whereas old-school sigils are laboriously formal invocations to existing metaphysical entities, Chaos Magick sigils essentially *create new entities* to suit the artist's purpose. Inscribing his intentions, the practitioner condenses and modifies that inscription into an abstract symbol then invests personal energy into it through intense meditation and releases the sigil into the world to fulfill its creator's goal. For Spare, this involved ornate wordcraft and draftsmanship, sometimes combined with automatic writing; many practitioners prefer crafting artworks, dances, songs, computer programs, or other media with a similar process and (one hopes) similar results.

As a focus instrument, Ecstatic sigils combine meditation, energy, and artwork (dance, music, computer programming, whatever) to craft a custom-made thought-form brought into existence through a symbol. **Mage 20's** entries about those instruments provide practical and theoretical guidance for how those tools fit together to focus a magickal Effect. Under normal circumstances, such sigils demand time: several minutes to several hours or more. Ecstatics, however, can mess with time, creating such sigils in a turn or two if they have Time 2 or better, enough Arete to succeed, and enough subtlety to avoid getting gut-kicked by Paradox in the process.

Powerful thought-forms tend to take on lives of their own. If they *do*, see **Mage's** entries for “Memes,” “Symbols” “Thought-Forms,” and “Memophores” (pp. 594, 598–599, and 638–639), as well as **The Book of the Fallen** entries “Hypersigils and Egregores,” **Craft Memetic Catastrophe**, and “Memetic Entities” (pp. 148, 160, and 194–196).

Unlikely Allies



Despite their shady reputation, most Ecstatics make friends easily, and in the strangest places. Beyond their longtime bonds with the Thanatoic, Speaker, and Verbena Traditions (and their recent associations with Etherites and Adepts), the Sahajiya party with unexpected companions for understandable, if sometimes disquieting, reasons.

Money, and Lots of It

Although both sides deny it, Ecstatics share a long and mutually profitable history with the Technocratic Syndicate and its High Guild predecessors. Artists need patrons; patrons like money; artists who *make* money for their patrons enjoy the best things money can buy... so long as they've got a sharp sense of business, that is. Both groups sneer about the losers on the other side of that exchange. Sneer all the way to the bank, that is.

As arrangements go, this one's straightforward: One partner supplies resources; the other supplies talent; both sides profit, and each party thinks they got the better end of the deal. It's all "off the books," of course, as such cooperation is officially forbidden. This alliance is an open secret, though, with the associated factions letting things slide so long as no one gets any big ideas. Every so often, partnerships get too chummy for comfort, and those partners find themselves on their faction's bad side. Individual cases aside, though, this association has endured centuries because both sides gain more than they lose from it.

Passionate Dreamers

A far more benevolent collaboration exists between Ecstatics and the fae, most notably (though not exclusively) with the satyr kith. The appeal is obvious: Ecstatic mages are Glamour personified, and changelings throw the best parties in town. Oh, there's enough capital-D *Drah-Ma* to fill every slot on the Top 40 pop charts for a year. That's half the fun of it, though. Stuffy fae look down their pointy noses at such displays, of course, but who wants to party with *those* assholes anyhow?

Dancing Common Ground

Parties, art, and other common ground forged a network between the Ecstatic Tradition and certain Disparate Crafts: the Bata'a, Hollow Ones, Solificati, and certain Ngoma, Kopa Loei, Batini, Sisters, and Taftani. In many cases, those ties go back centuries; Sh'zar himself was a renegade Sufi, Cultists and Hollowers rubbed elbows in the Victorian underworld, and voodoo has fascinated Ecstatics since the Bad Old Days. Psychotropic pursuits unite today's Solificati and their Ecstatic peers. If any Tradition seemed poised to jump ship and join the Disparate Alliance, it would be this one.

That said, the Naturals are loose cannons. Sure, they have friends among the Crafts, but that doesn't mean the Alliance welcomes them. As the saying goes, "Trust people to be who they show themselves to be." For Disparate elders, the Cult has a long way to go before its merits outweigh its liabilities.

Appreciation for Creative Decadence

Here's a big reason why:

Vampires.

Specifically, the art-addicted vampires known among Kindred as Clan Toreador.

One of the Cult's dirty little secrets involves the mutual fascination between Awakened artists and blood-guzzling artists. It goes back further than anyone wants to admit, and though all parties realize it's a very bad idea, the attraction Toreador vampires feel toward sweet-blooded Ecstatics and the pull those mages feel toward wealthy, gorgeous, hedonistic supercorpses is undeniable.

Everyone involved tries to set limits, of course. Vampiric elders are far too clever to reveal their secrets to mortal

occultists, and wise mages know better than to trust a vampire further than the length of wood it takes to stake one. In game terms, neither party knows much about the other, and both strive to keep things that way. Still, when you're dealing with literally charming mages, and vampires who specialize in fucking of bodies, minds, and souls, then many things are difficult to conceal for long.

A Friend of Courage

If it's true that the Traditions and Technocracy are moving toward alliance, then the Cult of Ecstasy is a major reason why. **Mage** Preludes reveal a longtime bond between the idealistic Technocrat John Courage and the Ecstatic Primus Lee Ann Millner. Those stories may or may not be true; if they *are* true, though, then a covert network headed by those masters of their respective sects has been carefully steering the Union and the Council toward a truce. A world facing extinction, after all, can't afford "Ascension Wars." When bigger threats benefit from division, then unity is the only rational and enlightened course.

"Unlikely" is a good description for this metaplot option; stranger things, though, have happened, especially in this ever-changing World of Darkness.





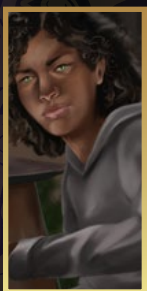
DREAMSPEAKERS

(The Kha'vadi)

"I want you to understand none of this was me...it was the people who stood up."

— LaDonna Tamakawastewin Brave Bull Allard

Overview



The name you know us by is not our own. The sacred languages and shrouded rites documented by your scholars as raw and naive are knots tied in a hallowed net of intermarriages, honored oaths, and divine reciprocity. Where you and yours record unintelligible chants and backward bongo beating, we endure, we maintain, and we empower. The so-called Awakened claim the greatest authorities over our many worlds, crowning themselves gods and monarchs over all, and in this, all of the peoples. But they choose not to acknowledge the People of the Grass, the People of the Salmon, Spider's Children, Stone's Flock, Moon who Transforms and all of her daughters, or even the get of all of the books, recordings, and cameras and computers they hold sacrosanct. Our worlds overflow with great nations who deserve all the respect due to the most ancient wizard, crouched upon her fallen tower, for all of eternity, and more.

There are those who believe they have a mandate to steal secrets from God, and those who believe that they must sing God's word until every soul becomes one with her. There are those who deem themselves the arbiters of which deaths are sacred and which are profane, and those who are certain of their own will, certain their own visions are the greatest of potentials in their world. We are none of these, and for being none of them,

we are feared and segregated, admonished, and dismissed. But our pact is one of respect and mutuality. We are given a gift, this is true, but it does not cast us great, or chosen, or divine. Our gift is that of connection. We are siblings to the Grass and cousins of the Salmon. Our people have wed Spider's Children and been adopted by Stone's Flock. We are the stewards of the Earth and all her realms. We are caretakers and protectors. We are parents and children. We are stalwart guardians of traditions ancient and revered, and we spin new tales and new customs around an infinitely transforming world, the place where our children will open their eyes.

The name you wrapped us in, Those-Who-Speak-With-Dreams, the Dream-Speakers, is paint splashed across the walls of the first mountains, a road-sign in the depths of the jungles. Turn and witness the path we walk from behind, we walk contrary, or not at all. You call us intermediaries and intercessors, but we do not walk between two worlds, forever torn — we walk the dream path, where all worlds are one, and all nations are tied together. Names are a tool forged in a dreamless world. Call us the Dreamcallers, Kha'vadi, the Wise People, the People of High Degree, or the Dreamspeakers, but we are beyond name and beyond measure. We are the dreams of our ancestors made real; we are those who survived, and those who endured, and we are unbound and unbroken.

History



Here there is a large drum, fastened from gifts given to us by Alligator, by Buffalo, by Eagle, by Vulture, and by Dogwood. Here there is a large drum without a name and its face is unpainted. This is the first drum and the last drum. Each beat is the song of our ancestors. Each beat is the song of our children. Open your throats, and the beats come forth, rhythmic, from time before memory, and until the last babe closes their eyes.

Dagot'ee!

One drummer comes and takes their seat beside the drum. They open their mouth and lift their hand, the stick invisible in the darkness. Their voice is thunder, and the stick beats down upon the head. *Thud, thud, thud!* "This is our story!"

The People wander in the darkness, searching for food and searching for light. They search for a long time but do not know time: No sun lights the sky and no moon hides within the night. Exhausted and demoralized, the people summon the Dreamcaller forth to give them direction, but no one comes when they call. They cry out and wail and still no one comes. The path leaders grow together and call a council, "We must choose the Dreamcaller, because they will not choose themselves." This is agreed upon, and they turn to the People once more and with their lips point to the youngest of them, She Has No Parent. She Has No Parent explains, "I am not the Dreamcaller; I know nothing of the Dream!" But the council of path leaders is already decided. "You are the Dreamcaller; show us the way!"

She Has No Parent thinks about what to do and comes up with a way to lead the People in the right direction. "I have decided," she begins, "Take the best horse from the best rider. Throw the warmest and most beautiful blanket over its back. Fill the saddle with food and waterskins and then attach the finest bow and a full quiver, as well as a pathfinder's rifle and bandolier! Then, put the horse down in the valley."

The People leap to obey. The wisdom of the Dreamcaller is not questioned. The Dreamcaller spins the world into being, and to challenge their demands is to sever the knots that bind all of being together. The People collect the best horse and blanket and fill the saddlebags with rations. Slung over the saddle are the finest bow and rifle and plenty of ammunition. The horse is led down into the valley, and the People wait.

Time passes without measure (no sun lights the sky and no moon hides within the night), and the People are still lost. "Go and check on the horse," demand the path leaders. The scouts climb down into the valley and feel around with their hands, finding no horse, blanket, or saddle. When they return they report that they found nothing. "Where has the horse gone? Did the Dreamcaller take it? The Dreamcaller has taken it. She told us she knew nothing of the Dream!"

The oldest grandmother says, "She is the Dreamcaller, and she has shown us the way."

"Look to the valley below us," the first drummer thunders, "and see the stones there with hoofprints left behind. Every time you walk through this valley, remember the story of She Has No Parent."

Mhoreso!

A second drummer joins the first, seated opposite. They open their mouth, and a great wave comes crashing against the stones as they strike the drum head. *Thud, thud, thud!* "This is our story!"

Mother of Loving Spirits tends her garden and her children. The walls of her city are ancient and beyond memory — if not dream — but the roots of her flowers dig into the drystack, filling forgotten holes with growth. One day, Mother of Loving Spirits dreams the city will be held aloft on the roots of her children. She wanders the grounds and sits beside the plants which molder and rot. She tends the sickest saplings, knowing the blight will spread if left to its own device. Her children, loving spirits and loving Wise alike, recognize her strength and cherish her. Mother of Loving Spirits is, herself, the plant that grows in the cracks of the drystack.

But a bitter wind blows, and upon it come the spores of the spirit-eaters. Mother of Loving Spirit's garden stretches from one edge of her city to the other, and while she is walking, the spores settle behind and beneath her. She does not see them as they nestle into the roots of the child we now only name Outcast. Outcast becomes the rot. At first, Outcast settles to spread the sickness within the drystack but the spirit-eaters have another message, a greater one.

They whisper to Outcast, "The drystack must fall, but you cannot break it from within. Each stone is carved to the shape of another, and each one hand-chosen by Being to sit within the curve of another. The drystack is too strong for you alone to destroy."

Outcast, infected with the fears and terrors born of the spirit-eaters begs, "But what then shall I do, because I have all of these roots, and they have only ever touched the drystack. It is all I know to touch!"

The spirit-eaters hiss back to Outcast, “No, you are wrong. You are blind and foolish, and you must think of who tended you when you were sick. Who touched you? There it is. You can see it now.”

So Outcast turns his face upon Mother of Loving Spirits, showing the rot in his limbs and in his roots. Outcast confesses his deeds, spreading the rot within the drystack, but asks of Mother of Loving Spirits for healing.

Mother of Loving Spirits sees him. There are some who tell this story and confess now that she is a fool. They speak it more gently, naming her naive, naming her too loving, but she is neither of these things. She is the first Mother who has a name, for good or ill, and her hand guides her children toward growth and renewal – toward strength. Mother of Loving Spirits is a believer but is not without sight or wit.

Mother of Loving Spirits sees Outcast for what he is.

Still, she goes to him.

Calling to her child, Mother of Loving Spirits sings the song of purification and prepares medicine in her shell bowl. She bends before Outcast and, with wisdom, closes her eyes. With prayer song on her lips, and medicine in her hands, she sings into the Dream that her husband might hear. Outcast sees her, crouched, with closed eyes, and with the spore-grown thorns upon his limbs, Outcast lashes out, driving the thorn into Mother of Loving Spirits’ heart so deeply that Outcast then drowns in her blood. Look here and see the drystack walls of Mother of Loving Spirits’ city. They still stand. See them and remember her story.

Many of us sing songs of Mother of Loving Spirits, and this is only one, but you know this song, and you sing it with me, and this song makes us one. It makes us strong. The song carves our shapes into one another, and we are her drystack.

Ekileer!

A third drummer arrives, branch in one hand and stone in the other. “These are the gifts of the land,” she sings, as the sun and all of its fires burst forth from her lips. She ties the stone and branch together and sings with the others, beating the drum with her land-gift. *Thud, thud, thud!* “This is our story!”

The Council sings a story of cannons that fell the walls of Mistridge. This is the beginning of their great war. Cannons and walls are the language of war they understand best. We do not know the others for centuries, and when we do they look upon us with pity and disdain – yet still they see us as weapons for their war.

War comes to us just before, just as, and for long after the Council does. The story of our war is a bear who follows the same path as the Ascension War, but is a different

animal, with different prey. The bear of defeat is hungry – it hollows itself out over and over and over again, gnawing on the bones of its brethren – and so it ranges far, looking for anything that will sate its hunger.

It finds us.

We are not unprepared; we are overwhelmed. The war comes to our shores shaped by the Serpent’s footprint. The war comes to the great island carved on the back of Turtle. The war comes to us from ships sailing down the nine rivers upon the back of Frog. Everywhere we are, the war finds us. Our blood, our families, all of our relations. We do not only look to siblings and cousins; we look to the other peoples of the world – the families of Serpent, Turtle, and Frog, of Wolf, and Eagle, and even Bear – to find those brave enough to bear their visions. And the People sing to us – we know the war is coming, but we are warriors all, and we refuse to put down our knives.

First, they steal food and stones, the gifts of the land. *Thud, thud, thud!* Then they steal the land itself. Then they steal the women! They steal the children! *THUD, THUD, THUD!* Now, finally, with nothing left, they steal our stories; they steal our art; and they steal our faith, selling it at J.C. Penny and on Etsy to put more dollars in filthy, bloody hands!

Now the Council sings of the War at its end. They sing of peace treaties and truces after we demanded them for centuries. Is their war over? Who are we to decide? We were never consulted on it, only dragged into it. Is their war over? Maybe. Is ours? As long as our people’s spirits are the targets of Hollow Bear’s forever-hunger, our war is never over. You do not need to look to a lake or mountain or wall to know this – it is carved into our hearts.

Niltse!

A fourth drummer joins the circle, their face hidden behind a stone mask embedded with turquoise. A fifth and then a sixth and seventh drummer join. Two more join, their masks fashioned of copper cables and glass, until there are nine. Each beats the drum in the same tempo and rhythm with the others. *Thud, thud, thud!* Their mouths, partially hidden behind their masks, open to sing, and a great storm billows forth. A great fog is summoned, obscuring the drummers, but the drumbeat continues. “This story belongs to us!”

In the beginning, there is the family. The Creators blow spirit into every child. Every person is also Being. We know our Being and see the Being in our siblings, in our cousins, and in our distant relations. We see the Being in the Creators above, who rest in the sky, singing to us on the winds that blow from the five directions. The vines and roots that connect us to our families, and across the land to all of our relations, seem too short to reach Creators.

The relations are called together, and it is agreed, all will jump as one and reach for the sky. Together at

once, across the world, all the People jump and reach for the Creators, for the stars. Most of the People fall back to the land and continue on their way. But some of the People are stuck there, in the sky. Some you know and accept – Eagle and Vulture, already part of this song, Hawk, Heron, and Bat. But others are there as well, and you can see them still. They are all our relations, the Northern Lights, the stars made up of connections and

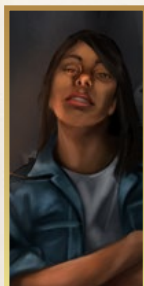
relations into the Fawns, the Lost Hunters, Spider, and Coyote's Daughters.

And all of those who become stuck in the sky, they are bound to the Creators, and they are still bound to the People.

We are the Children of Stars, the people between and of Being. We touch Creation and bring it to all our relations.

Anej.

Current Events



We have never been willing participants in the Ascension War. Our choice to join the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions was born out of an understanding of dangers that were coming to our families, to the land, and to all of the People. There is an idea that there can be only one idea, but that is not our path. Now, however, that the War is declared over, we stand in our lands, devastated and ruined. Our families and communities are torn apart, our relationships ripped asunder, and traditions and spirituality stolen and made mockeries of.

But we are a people of great love and great survival. We weathered the most brutal violence the War had to offer and stood our ground. Our power is in medicine, in healing, and more than anything, in the ties that bind us together and make us powerful. We are more than Kha'vadi, and we are more than Dreamspeaker – we are the People, and we endure.

The most pivotal event separating the then from the now is the Avatar Storm, and although it turned all of Awakened society on its head, it upset the Kha'vadi more than any of the Traditions. Those Without Name wandered and tended the Other Side more carefully and with more intent than any other Tradition. More Dreamspeakers were lost within the Umbra and destroyed by the Avatar Storm than any other singular Tradition. The Four Winds, a faction of Kha'vadi devoted to Umbral exploration and understanding, simply ceased to exist. Primus Tom "Laughing Eagle" Smithson's disappearance unsettled a Tradition which never held much political power within the Council. Smithson, perhaps the most prominent Dreamspeaker to disappear, took ancient knowledge of the spirit ways with him and left many young Dreamcallers without guidance and teachings.

Entire Umbral Chantries disappeared overnight, and accessing Horizon Realms created by the Kha'vadi became impossible. Realms such as the Yambula'kitino and the Lodge of the Gray Squirrel deteriorated and became ghost towns, bereft of the Wise People who cultivated them. The greatest

loss was the vast realm of memory built and sustained by the Baruti, Motlobo wa Poloto. Centuries of teachings, stories, songs, memories, and dreams were severed instantaneously



from the Kha'vadi who relied upon their connection to the other side. The Keepers of the Sacred Fire still sing stories of mourning and perform rites of remembrance for the sacred places which were torn from them. There are those who believe that the Council of Nine are better off for having lost access to their carefully crafted Horizon Realms, that they're now forced to live in "the real world" and deal with the problems therein, but that belief carries an arrogance which the Kha'vadi cannot afford. The people from whom the Kha'vadi descend, and the traditions they've inherited, have been subject throughout history, and presently, to the greatest crimes of genocide and erasure, and for them, the sacred spaces that were their Horizon Realms represented homes untouched by violence, hearts untouched by sorrow,

and families never torn asunder by the "progress" of colonizing nations.

In the wake of the Avatar Storm and the devastation of the Dreamspeakers' spiritual connections, the youngest members of the Tradition have set their eyes on goals that are within their reach. A few, certainly, seek to reconstruct the sacred places of old, but that work is long-term, painstaking process. More Kha'vadi refocus their efforts on maintaining spiritual and familial ties, as well as nation-to-nation relationships. The Tradition has seen a powerful resurgence in a philosophy of community first, an idea which is far from alien to them, but sometimes lost when one has access to the kind of power that the Awakened do. The Dreamspeakers who most embraced disconnection from



Factions and the Dreamspeakers

As detailed throughout this section, the Kha'vadi are in a period of greater unification in today's world. Some of these shifts in organization are dependent on the integration of certain plot elements and Future Fates. For details on how the factions might manifest differently when choosing alternative metaplot elements see Future Fates p. XX.

family and community were the first claimed by the Avatar Storm. Those who remained cleaved to their connections, whether they be actual family, local spirits, and tribal nations, or broad-reaching Black and Indigenous resistance movements, organizations devoted to decolonization, and multi-nation camps devoted to protecting sacred places at risk from the power-grabs of heartless trillionaires and global corporations.

The advancement and accessibility of the internet, and in particular social media, is a gift to young Kha'vadi. Although the common stereotype that comes with being one of the Wise People is that of being a technophobic throwback, the truth is much more complicated. The Dreamcallers do not shy away from technology at all and in fact will argue that their own technologies and sciences are sacred ways of knowing. For centuries these practices were uncorrupted by Western science, itself devoted to control, colonization, and destruction. Presently, Dreamspeakers, especially the Ghost Wheel Society, devote themselves to rediscovering, maintaining, and pursuing their ways of knowing. Unsurprisingly, for a Tradition so focused on connection and community, social media has become a natural home. This also serves as a powerful tool to bring the People of High Degree together and bind them more powerfully in unified causes — at least against those who would oppose them — they are certainly still as capable of infighting as any passionate family. Although the Ghost Wheel Society walks at the forefront of the efforts to further spirit-led ways of thinking and sciences, technologists can now be found among every Dreamspeaker faction, from the Keeper of the Sacred Flame teaching her grandmother how to livestream her prayer songs to millions of followers, to the Baruti archivist who also builds and maintains carbon neutral data storage to record hundreds of thousands of stories and performances, both traditional and contemporary, to the Red Spear Society warrior who battles cyber warfare from militant multinational corporations who seek to disrupt resistance movements. Today, the Dreamspeaker that entirely eschews technology is rare, and those few are supported by those who embrace it.

April 2016 was a turning point for the Dreamcallers

which brought all this together. It cannot be stated clearly enough that Standing Rock did not happen due to the influence of the Awakened or any other supernatural power. It was, however, a powerful beacon to the Wise People, and many of them flocked there to show support to their nations and kin. Here at this place, where the powers of greed and destruction sought to corrupt the sacred places where ancestors, memories, families, and traditions were one and the same with the land, the people came together from disparate nations across the globe to link hands and share prayer and protect the water and heritage of the Standing Rock people as one. The Kha'vadi, already slowly being carved into a Tradition of connection, were inspired by the people who, throughout history, were meant to lead, teach, and guide themselves. The Dreamspeakers who came to Standing Rock humbled themselves in this lesson and took to maintaining the camp (the most prominent of them being Rocio Medina-Carillo and Sister Moriah, see p. XX), self-imposing camp clean-up duties, working in soup kitchens, and even guarding and maintaining the composting toilets. But they watched, and they learned, and they've taken the lesson of crossing barriers of belief and culture for themselves, as opposed to having the Council forcefully manufacture it for them.

Not all practitioners of the ancient ways agree with this movement, however. Although factions such as the Akinkanju emphasize the need to maintain unique cultural identities and preserve the traditions of one's own peoples, there are those who have bucked against the solidification of the Dreamspeakers. If they were ever a political faction at all, the Solitaries (also sometimes called Independents) are essentially no longer part of the Tradition. Their paradigms and practices follow a lot of the same foundations and priorities as the Dreamcallers, but they have no interest in maintaining community connections, or really any connections at all. The surviving Dreamspeakers who were once part of this group splintered away and became Orphans (although some few have joined the Disparate Alliance, working closely with the Thunder Society and Itz'at).

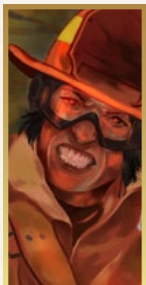
The most terrifying consequence of the greater unification of the Dreamspeakers is that their enemies, who once

dismissed them just as quickly and out-of-hand as their allies, are now forced to take them seriously and have dialed up their response to Black and Indigenous-led resistance efforts across the globe. The strength the Dreamspeakers have drawn from building stronger communities has not gone unnoticed, and the Technocracy and Nephandi alike (although their methods greatly differ) have taken to attacking those communities within, fostering jealousies, bickering, in-fighting, and lateral

violence. They use the same tools the Kha'vadi have embraced — the internet, the media, and academia — to stir trouble from within. Just because the Wise People have strengthened their familial and spiritual ties does not mean that they must not constantly defend and reinforce them.

We are in the eyes of the world now, and our spirits must be protected. Good thing that's what we're best at.

Notable Personalities



The Kha'vadi don't place as much importance on individual medicine-workers as the other Traditions might. Leaders come and go, and while their positions are important, and leave some lasting impact, in the end all their efforts are geared toward the next generation. So, while the Dreamspeakers commune with their own ancestors with reverence, they also do not dwell on great people of the past except as stories that further their teachings and beliefs.

Inarguably, the two most well-known Dreamspeaker ancestors are Naioba and Star-of-Eagles, the legendary founders of the Tradition who both died centuries ago. Each of them is spoken of with reverence, and Naioba in particular has had hundreds of stories spun about her and her importance in the unification of a Tradition that might not have otherwise ever remained whole. But both Naioba and Star-of-Eagles are gone. The power that they now carry within the Tradition is in what they stood for and what they believed. They were a symbol of the possibilities inherent in the marriage of disparate traditions and beliefs, and how they might come together in harmony, which today's Dreamspeakers still seek to accomplish.

Walking-Hawk also hailed from the same era as Naioba and Star-of-Eagles. His participation in the March of the Nine sealed the fate of the Dreamspeakers' connection to the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions for centuries to come. Like the founders of the Tradition, Walking-Hawk is gone, but his legacy is often misunderstood. Walking-Hawk was known to be a naysayer of the concept of the unified Traditions, and that was why he was chosen for the March. He did not believe that any good could come of the alliance, and the other members read this as him having a general bad attitude. But that bad attitude was also born of whispers of the ghosts of his ancestors, and visions of what his children would endure.

Even the Laughing Eagle, Tom Smithson, is but a memory now. His political presence astride the Seat of Spirit did not carry so much weight while he sat upon it, but he

also did not care to use it. Like many members of the Four Winds, his interests were usually cast as far away from the internal structures of the Council as they could be. Laughing Eagle is considered another casualty of the Avatar Storm. The Lodge of the Gray Squirrel, once a bustling hub of activity created and maintained by him, is now merely a realm of forever rolling hills, covered in tall grass. From time-to-time herds of wild horses, bearing similarities to the spirit-horses he once tended, can be seen galloping in the distance.

Some of the old ones do remain, and the two oldest known members of the Kha'vadi, Tasygan and Adambara, heavily influence the contemporary affairs of the Tradition. Although she does not claim any kind of leadership role, Tasygan is the head of the Baruti in all but official title, and none have made more efforts than her to recover the lost knowledge of Motlobo wa Poloto. Tasygan takes upon herself the impossible task of collecting stories from every Dreamspeaker there is. Once her realm was solely devoted to the protectorate of her homeland, Tuva, but now she is a world-traveler and story-collector. She's almost always seen in the company of Adambara, the Spider, who has long been a traveler before she joined with Tasygan and the Baruti. However, her goals have always explicitly been the expansion of her web. Adambara is one of the primary forces within the Tradition working to keep individual Dreamcallers connected to one another. The Kha'vadi recognize these two elderly women and know that when they come calling, the rainbow follows.

Politically, the two most active and prominent Kha'vadi are Rocio Medina-Carillo, a Cora Indian schoolteacher operating out of Nayarit, and Pulmari, a political activist who resides in the southern tip of the Andes. The pair of them have consistently presented a unified front to the rest of the Council of Nine and share the Seat of Spirit. Although the shared seat is unusual, they both point out that it is not without precedent, as the founders of their Tradition shared the seat as well. However, Rocio and Pulmari have severely different views on where the Tradition should head, and their infighting is infamous within the Tradition.



Rocio is a member of the Keepers of the Sacred Flame and emphasizes the importance of maintaining time-honored traditions. Chief among these is the Wise People's responsibility to their own communities, human and spiritual alike. Despite her status in the Sacred Flame, she is also renowned for making unusual and unlikely connections. The circle of magi she leads are primarily Dreamspeakers, but her second is Marisol Coronado, a Yaqui Virtual Adept.

Pulmari, on the other hand, trained at the knee of Xoca, a Dreamspeaker once notorious for engaging with the Technocracy explosively and decisively. When Xoca left the Dreamspeakers, disgusted with the Council's tightened reigns on war against the Technocracy, to join the Thunder Society, Pulmari took his place as one of the biggest firebrands within the Tradition. They are the nominal leader of the Red Spear Society (they've been challenged a dozen times since taking the role, but haven't lost it yet), and unlike Rocio, they believe that the time for holding onto old songs and dances and making peace are over. They carry a strong hatred of the Union but an even stronger one of the Nephandi. They insist that Rocio and her ilk have the right to resist with non-violent prayer and ritual, but once that fails, the Red Spear Society will be standing right behind them, and they are prepared for war.

When the Thunder Society formed and expressed their disgust with the Dreamspeakers, they suggested that harboring ex-Technocrats was just as dangerous as harboring "reformed" Nephandi, accusing the Kha'vadi of both. The splintering nearly tore the Tradition apart, and many

believed that the Spirit Smiths were the ex-Technocrats that the Thunder Society were pointing their fingers at. In fact, the Spirit Smiths were one of the few factions that hadn't arisen from a history of colonization, and as animosities grew, they nearly left the Tradition to form their own Craft as well. Instead, Sister Moriah stepped in.

Sister Moriah

Sister Moriah, an emerald-eyed Creole woman long operating out of New Orleans and tending to the impoverished communities therein, is the current head of the Ghost Wheel Society. Like many Dreamspeakers, she never sought that role, but it was given to her when she called the first Ghost Wheel Council and invited the remaining members of the Spirit Smiths to be one with them. The merging of these two factions was one of the first steps toward healing after the sundering caused by the departure of the Thunder Society, and since then, Sister Moriah has expanded her influence from tending to Louisiana's poor, to pushing the Ghost Wheel Society toward using their medicine-work in the inner cities to build support and infrastructure for those who need it most. After Rocio and Pulmari, she is one of the most recognized faces among Council mages, merely because the Ghost Wheel Society is more willing to work side-by-side with them than any other Dreamspeaker faction.

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Director

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina

(Formidable) 4, Charisma (Compelling) 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance (Striking) 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Art 2, Athletics 1, Awareness (Penumbral) 5, Computer 2, Cosmology (Protocol) 4, Crafts (Jury-rig) 4, Drive 3, Empathy (Trauma) 4, Enigmas 3, Esoterica 3, Etiquette 1, Expression 3, Firearms 3, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Melee 1, Occult 2, Politics 3, Science (Engineering) 4, Stealth 2, Streetwise (Houseless Communities) 5, Subterfuge 2, Survival (Streets) 4, Technology 3

Backgrounds: Allies: 3, Avatar 2, Contacts 4, Influence 2, Resources 2, Status 4

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1 (Layered clothing)

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Entropy 1, Forces 3, Matter 4, Prime 4, Spirit 4

Powers: Bullet-Rider's Blessing (p. xx)

Countermagic: 4 (Permanent effect)

Equipment: Rusted out pick-up truck; switchblade; Derringer; glass beads; backpack full of busted motherboards and spare clothes; jewelry made from shells, concrete, opossum bones, and copper wire; wire-wrapped raccoon claw earrings (Fetish which offers protection against hostile Numina).

Image: Sister Moriah is a tall and reedy Creole woman with sparkling green eyes. Her bone structure is fine and birdlike, but she is also over six feet tall. She is long of limb and in another lifetime, she could have modeled. Her 'locs are graying and always decorated with various glass, bone, and metal baubles. She dresses eccentrically in long, draping, dark fabrics but always wears sensible running shoes. Everywhere she goes, she carries a canvas backpack over her shoulder.

Roleplaying Notes: Although you speak with excellent manners and always show consideration and concern for whom you are speaking with, you also carry yourself with a constant sense of always having somewhere to go, or something to do. You genuinely care for those who need your help, but your sense of purpose keeps you forever on the move. Speak with a mild Creole accent and weave meaningless enigmas into your conversations when you are annoyed with who you are speaking to, or when you want to leave.

Focus: *Creation is Innately Divine and Alive* (**Mage 20** p. 569), *Craftwork* (**Mage 20** p. 574), *Blessings and Curses* (**Mage 20** p. 588), and *Devices and Machines* (**Mage 20** p. 591).

Bàòkú

Bàòkú is a professor of philosophy at the University of Abomey-Calavi who has worked closely with the Baruti over the years and has spent many weeks and months in prison cells at their side. Although they earned many of

those prison sentences at various protests, more often than not, Bàòkú has been imprisoned by the state for teaching questionable practices, or merely for their refusal to abide by any concept of binary gender. Bàòkú emphasizes a brand of political and philosophical thought that encourages both decolonization of the state and of the self. After initiation as one of the People of High Regard, Bàòkú began to make treatises to the Tradition at large about how to manage the concept of being named by colonizers, and indirectly takes some responsibility for the internal name change (though they do not prefer Kha'vadi themselves). Bàòkú specializes in dealing with the strange and enigmatic spirits of the High Umbra and insists that the Dreamspeakers have not done enough work throughout their history to foster those relationships. They are renowned for critiquing the Tradition from within, but when asked about leaving the Tradition, they only say, "This is my home." Although not a direct leader of any kind, the Tradition considers Bàòkú instrumental in the founding of the Akinkanju.

Nature: Idealist

Demeanor: Contrary

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics (Philosophy) 5, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Computer 3, Cosmology (High Umbra) 4, Empathy (Emotions) 4, Etiquette 3, Expression (Academic Essays) 4, Investigation 2, Law 2, Medicine 2, Meditation (Personal Assessment) 4, Occult 2, Politics 3, Research (African Philosophers) 5, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Avatar 3, Contacts 5, Cult 3, Fame 1, Influence 1, Status 3

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Life 2, Mind 4, Spirit 4, Time 3

Powers: Dwennimmen (p. XX)

Countermagic: 0

Equipment: Laptop, pristine binders full of notes, multiple books on philosophy and decolonization.

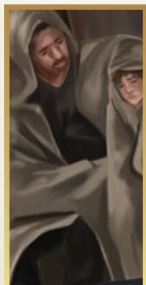
Image: Bàòkú wears inexpensive suits and stands with a slight hunch. They are always wearing glasses and sport a closely shaved head. Their most prominent feature is the series of *adinkra* tattoos which peek out from underneath their collar and their sleeves.

Roleplaying Notes: Speak lightly but with confidence. When you explain an idea or a subject, slowly sink into more and more academic language until you stop and

correct yourself (unless of course you are speaking with someone well-versed in such). Although you are soft-spoken, you never back down when you believe you are right. You are not unwilling to use Mind on individuals who would make your existence difficult, but sometimes you allow them to mistreat you to make a point.

Focus: *Bring Back the Golden Age!* (**Mage 20** p. 568), *Reality Hacking* (**Mage 20** p. 581), *Circles, Pentacles, and Other Geometric Designs* (**Mage 20** p. 590), *Meditation* (**Mage 20** p. 594), and *Thought Forms* (**Mage 20** p. 598).

Paradigm



Defining a distinct paradigm amongst the Kha'vadi, like any of the Mystick Traditions, proves challenging. There are common practices and methodologies, but when the Council of Nine named the Dreamspeakers as a single and unified entity, their goal was to define something they could not – and would not try to – understand. When a Mbuti Dreamspeaker presses his lips to his dying father's mouth to capture his *megbe*, there is little in common with a *noaidi* Dreamspeaker singing *joik* to echo the concept of a place sacred to them, and both are distinct from a *danzante* Dreamspeaker dancing the words of her elders into the spirits of her children. Every single Clever Person is a part of their community and a representative of their people and ancestors first, and Kha'vadi a distant second. When two Dreamcallers come from the same community, their practices still likely differ, as certainly there are many roles for a spirit worker to play for her people. The Tradition, however, has endured centuries of mystickal conflict with the Union and Nephandi and suffered through the brutalization, genocide, and complete erasure of their peoples. Throughout many attempts to strike at the heart of the Dreamspeakers, they have survived and continued to grow in strength and closer together due in part to the beliefs they have in common.

Outsiders often boil down the practices and paradigms of the Kha'vadi to shamanism and, less often – but more precise – animism. But boiling this Tradition down to a narrow idea of beliefs not only fails to scratch the surface but also creates a lot of misunderstandings. You cannot call the Wise People “the shaman Tradition” when shamanism itself is common among most of the Traditions. Further, to label a practice as shamanism and stop there is falling short of the fact that there are different kinds of shamanism and, more importantly, different purposes. Arguably, the Sahajiya practice shamanism just as much as the Kha'vadi, but their purpose in doing so is to seek the otherworldly, out-of-body experience which challenges their otherwise limited perception and brings enlightenment. The People of High Degree, on the other hand, when they are shamans at all – many are not – practice it more often out of a desire to communicate with the spirit and with the aspects

of Creation that lie hidden from humanity. The goal for Dreamspeaker shamans is not the altered state; it is the ability to build a bridge between distinct peoples, Spirit Workers, and the spirits themselves. Building those bridges and maintaining those relations are at the foundation of the faith principles which unite the Kha'vadi under the banner of a single Tradition.

Animism, the idea that all non-human entities in the world are possessed of spirit, carves at the tree of Dreamspeaker paradigm more precisely but is still burdened with its conceptual, academic roots. Animism is still an idea created by a culture who seeks definition and control to take power over that which it does not understand. By their nature, the Kha'vadi seek to break out of definitions and control, particularly those imposed by cultures which do not care to know them. The significance of animism in understanding their paradigm is in the concept of relational identities. Animists believe that all non-human aspects of reality carry their own spirit, or essence, just as humans do. Every mountain and river, deer and lizard, hurricane and earthquake, the stars, sun, and moon all have their own souls, personas, and most importantly, families. There are nations that consist of blizzards and thunderstorms and gentle drizzles. There are clans of dogs and families of ducks. Each one of these is a sovereign nation with its own rights and histories, and each should be respected as one would respect a neighboring people, or the next town, or a bordering state. Further, none of us are peoples whose relations are limited by siblings, parents, and children. Inter marriages are historically, and presently, common. Hawks who make their home in the sky are our aunties; severe mountain-faces are our grandfathers. The ocean and moon are the grandmothers and the stars our collective ancestors. But each family comes from a different land, and lives a different way, and for that we entreat upon them with particular protocol.

The tools and foci of the Kha'vadi are many and varied. Medicine People use feathers, sacred grasses, shells, and bones to entreat upon the natural world. The Ghost Wheel Society teaches the use of copper wires and microchips, diesel engines, and solar panels to appease the traditions of the Glass and Steel Peoples, the Children of Asphalt and Clay Rabbit. Other, specific practices, such as sacrifices to

Ghosts, Death, and the Unseen World

What does entering the world of the dead have to do with the world of spirits which the Dreamspeakers are supposedly so good at and so focused on?

Everything.

Although the metaphysics of the World of Darkness separate the Umbra out into many layers of spiritual reflection, including the Underworld, the realm of death in which ghosts reside, the Dreamspeakers do not necessarily differentiate the dead, i.e. ghosts, or Wraiths, from the Umbrood. Of course, they are not foolish either and understand that dealing with the dead, or with ancestors, and dealing with spirits of the land and animals require completely different sets of protocol, but either way, they consider them a type of spirit that should be given respect. Many Dreamspeakers are just as likely to refer to Umbrood as ghosts, as they are to refer to Wraiths as Ancestors or spirits.

Traversing the Underworld is a dangerous practice for any mage, including Medicine People, but so is traversing the Penumbra and Middle Umbra — they are merely different flavors of peril.

Beyond this, most Dreamspeakers do not necessarily see the Umbra as one world and the material as its reflection but instead see many worlds, sometimes four or five, sometimes hundreds, all layers on top of and interacting with one another. Once again, it all comes down to connections and relations.

the saints and cybernetic implants are also employed by the Wise People, but all of these tools boil down to one specific practice common throughout every member of the Tradition: protocols. When human beings entreat upon one another and call each other for assistance, there are thousands upon thousands of protocols which vary between cultures and innovated by subcultures. When making a business deal, you might “shake on it,” or when visiting your grandmother, you might bring her groceries by. Listing every possible protocol used to build and maintain relational bonds is impossible, but the limitlessness of protocols is also inspiring. It might make common sense that entreating with a spirit of purification demands the burning of sage and a prayer, or that calling for the assistance of a wolf spirit might necessitate the sacrifice of a prey animal or wearing the teeth or claws of the wolf around one’s neck, but the spirits of electricity might be pleased to deal with you after you’ve put a fork in a socket, or Glass Mothers might wish to see their bodies perforate your skin. Not all protocol demands sacrifice, nor is sacrifice uncommon. Practicing good protocol requires respect, support, and consideration of the spiritual concerns of the being you call upon.

Two Traditions share a similar, dangerous initiation rite. The Chakravanti and Kha’vadi alike demand that their members enter a death-state and survive it to become fully

fledged members of the Tradition. The Agama Sojourn practiced by the Chakravanti is more well-known, partially because these death-mages are known for walking the blade’s edge between living and dying, but also because the Sojourn is somewhat uniform Tradition-wide and easier for outsiders to recognize and describe. The death journeys practiced by the Kha’vadi are as unique as the many cultures that they draw upon and usually involve customary funerary rites from among their own people. The how of the journey is less important than the why, however. Dreamspeakers are, one-and-all, a people who straddle the places where the many worlds are the same and often insist that the difference between life and death, between material and spirit, between reality and non-reality are not simply dualistic states but matters of perception and ways of being. Breaking out of that binary perception, however, is challenging in a world that insists on strict definitions. One of the best ways to break a young Medicine Person of that perception is to bring them into the death-state while still living. Surviving this harrowing journey is not enough to prove that the potential Dreamspeaker is ready to join the Tradition. Survival is the basic requirement, but understanding that life and death are not opposite states but co-equal ones is the first, and most important, step in understanding the journey of the Wise People.



Rotes

These effects reflect the rotes used by the notable Dreamspeakers detailed above. Variants of these effects see use throughout the Tradition.

Bullet-Rider's Blessing

(• Entropy/ ••• Matter/ ••• Spirit)

Through earning the favor of specific spirits of technology, Sister Moriah makes a deal with them to walk between the borders of their power and becomes capable of pulling off miraculous effects like ignoring bullets or cameras to fail to capture her image or even causing a plane she is on to fail to take off.

System: First, Sister Moriah must make a compact with a spirit of technology that represents the specific technology she wishes to interfere with. The good relationship built with that spirit reflects out into its Court, Brood, or Nation, and for the duration of the compact, the specific technology has no effect on her whatsoever. If she makes a compact with bullets, bullets never touch her. If she makes a deal with the spirit of elevators, no elevator that she is standing within will operate. The relationships spirits have with one another are paramount in the use of this Rote, and because of this, she cannot choose overly broad technologies such as weapons, vehicles, or engines. But knives, boats, and steam

engines would sufficiently qualify. This has no effect on supernaturally enhanced technology.

Dwennimmen

(•••• Mind/ •••• Spirit)

By invoking one of their *adinkra* tattoos, *Dwennimmen*, the Ram's Horns, Báòkú invites The Voices, an Umbrood denizen of the Well of Souls into the sacred symbols inked on their body. In doing so, the Akinkanju temporarily becomes a powerful spirit-fetish, capable of invoking the power of The Voices.

System: This powerful alteration of self invokes the strength of the Avatar itself, offering up unheard of mental and spiritual resilience for the duration. All negatives due to wounds, or any other kind of distraction are cancelled out. All attempts to mentally coerce or influence Báòkú must first test against their Willpower before any other tests normally required (or against their Willpower × 2 if Willpower is the normal resistance roll). Finally, every turn, Báòkú regains a lost point of Willpower. This cannot cause the user's Willpower to rise above the maximum. While Báòkú exists as a living spirit-fetish, they cannot access their Arete or Sphere-magick (though previously invoked effects continue into their normal durations). Báòkú may end this effect prematurely at will, but the process of doing so is tortuous and exhausting, costing 5 Willpower points.

Unlikely Allies



In 2017 LaDonna Brave Bull looked back on her experiences at Standing Rock, after seeing militias release dogs to maul pregnant women and children who were singing prayer songs in the presence of the bulldozers that were digging up the graves of their ancestors. After the video of this assault went viral, thousands of people devoted to protecting the sacred swarmed to Standing Rock to stand up alongside the Indian Tribe protecting their own lands and waters. Among them, she recalled, were the “Aztec dancers” who displayed tall and beautiful plumage as they danced, and afterward, they stopped to smudge the people who needed healing. The Eagle and the Condor, she said, come together and heal the world. The Kha’vadi have never been strangers to allying themselves with other healers – they, themselves, are a massive alliance of Medicine People – and that is how they found themselves willing members of the Council of Nine, despite its often misguided efforts. The Spirit-Speakers are blessed, even when their allies cannot or will not support them and their causes, in being guided by the spirits and their own ancestors. Although often a significant challenge, the Dreamspeakers are so often willing to bite their tongues to get the job done, and in this, they’re often seen working their wisdom alongside the most blasphemous Chorister, the condescending Hermetic, and the ignorant and disrespectful Virtual Adept.

The Traditions

It is well-known that, historically, the closest allies of the Kha’vadi were the Sahajiya, the Verbenae, and the Chakravanti. All three of these Traditions share common practices and paradigms with the Dreamspeakers, particularly that of shamanistic ritual (of which the Sahajiya arguably practice just as much as the Dreamspeakers do). Like the Verbenae, the Dreamcallers demand strict adherence to ritual protocols and engage in self-sacrifice to guide and heal their peoples. Like the Chakravanti, the Wise People undergo initiation rituals which demand that the practitioner cross the veil of death and return. But more importantly, all three of these partner Traditions are deeply concerned with healing – that is to say, not the physical practice, although that is something all of them are exceptionally gifted at, but the healing of the soul of the people and of the world. All of them see different paths to healing, but healing is the ideal end. Even the bloodiest-handed Chakravanti turns to death to cut out disease.

The rest of the Traditions are another story. While they have never shied away from working with the Akashayana, sometimes their practices bear little in common. Where the Dreamspeaker sees that all the world is super-real and deserves an equal treatment, the Akashayana see the world as illusion and a reflection of the self. Where they can connect, however, is their mutual reverence of their ancestors, and together they will fight to protect their heritage and legacies. Today, Akashayana and Dreamcallers (particularly the Akinkanju) are often united in efforts to fight the corruption and misuse of ancestral lands, as well as working to pass down ancient traditions to their rightful inheritors.

Their relationship with the Celestial Chorus has proved much more challenging over the years. The Chorus has often been at the forefront of genocidal movements, particularly cultural erasure. However, the Dreamspeakers are nothing if not resilient, and although the evangelical nature of the Chorus has caused them centuries of horrors and grief, they are still able to see the idea of the unification of the One as being on par with their own internal beliefs of maintaining and building communal ties. Along with that effort, although the Chorus might often engage in strange versions of spiritual protocol, their angels and other divine beings are not unlike the spirits whom the Medicine People engage with. More importantly, Kha’vadi who have survived during centuries in which the Chorus brutally wielded their powerbase did so by merging with their traditions. Although the Chorus claims to be monotheistic, the Dreamspeakers saw the many faces of the gods and spirits behind their One True God and engaged with them as such. Today, the Dreamspeakers often work hand-in-hand with the Celestial Chorus in community building and advocating, as well as facing spiritual corruptions.

The Society of Ether and the Virtual Adepts have always proven challenging to work with because of their mutual disrespect for the methods and beliefs of the Dreamcallers. That said, as Medicine People whisper sacred languages and offerings to the spirits of cell phones, satellites, and Tesla coils, the two aforementioned Traditions have shown increasing, if begrudging, respect to the Dreamspeakers. Perhaps they still might speak dismissively, “I’m so glad they finally caught up.” The Dreamspeakers know better, though, and are often willing to fight with both in their own arenas with traditional sciences and technologies.

Unfortunately, the Dreamspeaker relationship with the Order of Hermes is the most damaged, and hence, the most challenged. The Order of Hermes prides itself as masters of

magick without compare, but the Kha'vadi have watched them steal the magicks and practices and medicines of other peoples for centuries, and their memories are long. Of course, they see that the Order is the head of the Council of Nine (if not remotely the heart) and are willing to assist them in meeting greater goals, but few of the Wise People will allow a Hermetic to speak down to them, particularly considering the many failures the Hermetics have been responsible for in the last century.

The Technocracy

Relationships with the Technocracy are even more challenging. Like the Choristers, the Union has spent centuries destroying the lands and spirits which the People of High Regard consider their sacred protectorate. Like the Hermetics, they have stolen the medicine of the Wise People and twisted it into something more war-like while claiming they were the first, the innovators of technologies which belonged to more ancient peoples. And like both the Akashayana and Chakravanti, the memories of the Kha'vadi are long and unforgiving. There are very few Dreamspeakers who will rush into a relationship with the Union, even in the face of potential gain.

Nevertheless, because of the pursuit of Indigenous sciences across the world, the Dreamcallers find themselves with more family drawn into the service of the ideals of the Union, if not the Union itself. The point at which the Dreamspeakers are most likely to find themselves willing to work with the Technocracy is either when the Technocracy makes active efforts to aid their communities, or else when their communities join them.

More than any other Convention, the Dreamspeakers are likely to work with the Progenitors. Although some factions of the Progenitors choose to use medicine for war-work, most of them are dedicated to healing, and on this, the Kha'vadi can see eye to eye with them.

One may also wonder about the Void Engineers, and it is true that the metaphysical disciplines of both groups find them working side-by-side from time to time. However, it is also true that their ideals (containment vs. relational) are completely at odds with one another, and they find themselves far more likely to come into conflict than to ally with one another...except, of course, when some unspeakable horror from beyond the worlds rears its ugly head.

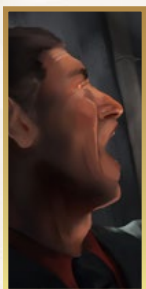
The Disparate Alliance

One would assume that the Kha'vadi might have an easier time working with the Disparates than any other Tradition, considering that they are always the furthest from the central politics and power structures of the Council of Nine and that they are most likely to be skeptical of the society of which they are a part. However, political divisions complicate their position with the Disparates. The defection of Xoca to the Thunder Society (see p. XX) and the hundreds of ex-Dreamspeakers like him chose to part with their own Tradition to seek another path, seeing the Council and its corruptions as irreparable.

Despite this, the Dreamspeakers share common bonds – both paradigmatic and relational – with the Thunder Society. Not all Dreamspeakers are Indigenous people of the Americas, but a significant percentage of their membership are, and all of the Thunder Society is. Further, the Thunder Society exists as a Craft due to the ideological split between Dreamspeakers who seek unity and those who wish to eschew every aspect of Western tradition and colonialism. The Thunder Society might not even have allied themselves with the Disparate Alliance if not for their concern that the Nephandic corruption which threatens the heart of the Council has also found its way into the Dreamspeakers themselves.

In the jungles of Central America, the Kha'vadi have found their most fruitful alliances with the Disparate Alliance working alongside the Itz'at. Although this Craft is difficult to understand (and their origins are beyond uncertain), they also have displayed a focus empowering and building their own communities, and because many of their communities are the same as Central American Medicine People, they very often find themselves working together to enact the same goals. However, the strangeness of the seemingly time-displaced Itz'at often has the Dreamcallers holding their cards close to their chests. The Itz'at clearly follow a Master/Apprentice leadership structure, but when the Masters are ever-present and never seen, and even the spiritual brethren of the Wise People know little to nothing of them, the Kha'vadi cannot help but wonder what the ultimate motivation of these hidden Masters might be.

Future Fates



This chapter is written with the assumption that you will use the version of the **Mage: The Ascension** metaplot in which the Avatar Storm occurred and then slowly resided. Understandably, the Avatar Storm has a massive impact on the Tradition that sits upon the Seat of Spirit, and how you choose to handle it in your own game will impact the state of the Dreamspeakers.

If you decide to run a campaign in which the Avatar Storm never happened, consider that the Four Winds will not only endure, but that they are one of the most prominent factions within the Tradition. They do not carry much political power, but they have the most knowledge and wisdom about the Umbra and spirits in general and are responsible for bringing those teachings back to the more terrestrial members of the Tradition.

Additionally, the Dreamspeakers will still have their many Horizon Zones, which were especially important to the Keepers of the Flame and the Baruti. The Keepers of the Flame will be somewhat less interested in focusing their efforts on the material world, and the Baruti will still be collecting stories at Motlobo wa Poloto instead of engaging in more intensive memory training and lineal passage of knowledge from teachers to apprentices.

That said, it is still likely that Laughing Eagle will retire as the Primus of the Dreamspeakers, as the Avatar Storm has nothing to do with the increased political engagement the Tradition is undergoing, and he has no real reason to want to hold onto the position if he respects the new leadership.

If you choose to run the Avatar Storm as extant, much of the material still applies, but the Tradition is both considerably weakened magickally (their Sphere of expertise is the most dangerous one to use), but also in extremely high demand from the other Traditions, who need powerful spirit-guides for when they must pass through the Storm.

Whichever version you use, the Kha'vadi are at a crossroads as far as their future is concerned. The philosophies of the Keepers of the Sacred Flame and the Red Spear Society are dominant and equally vying for Tradition leadership. But you do not have to keep them equal in your games. It is possible that Rocio could gain more support than Pulmari, weakening his effectiveness and causing the Tradition to focus on inward concerns and maintenance of ties. On the other hand, the anger that dwells within the hearts of the Kha'vadi has been brewing for centuries, and Pulmari's leadership could force them into being one of the most militant Traditions on the front lines of the many wars against their people and the Council of Nine.





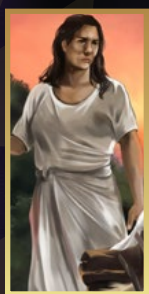
EUTHANATOS

(The Chakravanti)

"Just as a person puts on new garments after discarding the old ones, similarly, the living entity or the individual soul acquires new bodies after casting away the old bodies."

The Euthanatoi are a Tradition of many names, many different beliefs, and a shared respect for others doing the same difficult work as them. That respect and kinship informed their founding, their history, and who they are in the 21st century.

Overview



Euthanatos means ‘good death.’ Most other Tradition magi remember the second part but forget the first. They casually, and callously, describe the Euthanatoi as death cultists or assassins, or even Nephandi in waiting, and shy away from deeper contemplation of their philosophy. The Euthanatoi understand that: It’s hard to stare into the abyss. It takes practice, patience, and a deep reserve of empathy. The Tradition’s older name, *Chakravanti* or People of the Wheel, does a better job of conveying that message.

The Tradition’s central belief is reincarnation: All things must pass onward and return in a new form. The mission of the Euthanatoi is to ensure that the Great Wheel keeps turning. That nothing persists past its allotted span. Things that outstay their welcome — people, institutions, civilizations, even ideas — must gently shift onward to the next stage, replaced by whatever comes next. When that doesn’t happen, the world stagnates and decays. It’s unnatural, and it’s poison.

The Euthanatoi are a confederation of magi rather than an organized hierarchy. Two things define them. The first is their own death and return to life, the *Diksha*. For some, the return from the Shadowlands is their Awakening; for others, it’s a ritual introduction to the Tradition. How can someone who’s never known death judge the lives of others? The second essential element is the relationship between *Acarya* and *Chatra*,

master and student. The bond of trust and respect is deep, and both parties hold the other accountable for their actions, for how can one person steer the Wheel alone? And, if the *Chatra* should violate the oath they swear to their master and become a murderer instead of an agent of fate, their *Acarya* will hunt them down and end their life.

Other mages are right about one thing: The *Chakravanti* see themselves as the arbiters of the Good Death, carrying out the duty of *chakradharma*. They decide when it’s time to give the world, or an individual life, a nudge. That’s a serious responsibility, and it’s easy to bear it too lightly, to assume that your decisions are the right ones, to become cold, and to lose that empathy that so defines the Tradition. The *Chakravanti* know that condition well. They call it *jhor*, a spiritual deadness.

The same magics of Entropy that let the Euthanatoi see the fate of an object, person, or concept also let them nudge those fates with varying degrees of subtlety. Sometimes it’s better to let an illness take its course, or resist treatment, or let those years of wear-and-tear come crashing down. For Masters of Entropy, it’s easier to let someone fade into irrelevance and the world move on than put a gun to someone’s head.

It’s also a fact that however pure and grounded in life the Euthanatoi’s philosophies, their numbers do include a sect of magickal assassins. The rest of the Tradition keeps them at a distance, but they would never deny that ending lives is a skill as well as a vocation.

History

The history of the Euthanatoi is a chain of causation, the Great Wheel rolling along furrows dug thousands of years ago. What happens is what must happen, and when the Wheel stalls or someone fights too hard against Fate, the Euthanatoi are always there to do what must be done.

Prehistory

First, there was the Void, and the Void longed for being and it cried — or sang or screamed — the world into existence. After the world came gods, but the gods were too much for the world. Too strong and too numerous, some had to be sacrificed. The forerunners of the Euthanatoi wielded the knife. This story recurs throughout the groups that make up the Euthanatoi: the Vedic Purusha, Celtic tale of Danu and Donn, and the Hellenic death of Kronos. There is no single point of origin for the Euthanatoi: There must always be a sacrifice, and the one who wields the knife bestows the Good Death.

The history of the People of the Wheel, the Chakravanti, only much later the Euthanatoi, goes back to humanity's first realization that death is as necessary as it is tragic. Some must die so that others can live without overcrowding, famine, war, and ruin. This idea is, if not universal, widespread. It's not a philosophy unique to any one people or region. The Euthanatos paradigm existed on many continents.

It's a syncretic Tradition that became a whole greater than the sum of its parts through the movement of peoples. When the Aryans moved into India, the Romans into Greek and Celtic lands, the Zoroastrians who accompanied Alexander the Great into Asia, their priests and mystics found other cults with similar principles and practices. The faces and names of the gods were different, but their roles were so familiar it was easy to incorporate and adapt them, so that over time more of the groups who became the Euthanatoi included in their worship complementary concepts like justice, and occasionally vengeance. Other groups, like the magicians of Great Zimbabwe, came to the same conclusions without so much cultural interchange.

In many cases, those who served the Wheel, who stood closest to death, lived with fear and scorn. Death is taboo but necessary, and its agents stand a step beyond the norm.

The Himalayan War

Regrettably, the Himalayan War defines the Euthanatoi. The conflict, which raged for six hundred years, was their first contact with the early iteration of another Tradition. Members of the Akashayana and groups who later became the Euthanatoi, including the Dacoits, first encountered one another in northern India. They found common ground in shared ideas of the transitory nature of life and concepts of

death and rebirth. Until they didn't. The story is well known, and the facts vary little between the two sides who tell it.

A plague struck the region. The Dacoit Ranjit made the difficult decision to treat those who could recover and kill those who could not to stop the spread. The Akashic Stone Tiger was both shocked and horrified that Ranjit would make decisions reserved for higher, celestial powers. Stone Tiger killed Ranjit; the Dacoits retaliated; violence escalated, and war raged for more than half a millennium.

Why so long? The Akashayana and the Chakravanti both have close connections to their past lives. History is a wheel; what it ploughs under by its passage rises again. Combatants on both sides died, were reborn, and plunged back into the fray. Imagine an Avatar that's lived through generations of trauma, every incarnation piling on more horrors from battlefields and prison camps; deprivation, suffering, and violence. Many of those Avatars are still active in the 21st century. They're on other continents, with other priorities, but they remember the pain they suffered and caused. Some seek vengeance, some atonement. Some are so numb that morbidity and *jhor* are constant companions. However these reincarnated warriors process their trauma, it affects them. The events of that war were so terrible that both sides constructed Time wards that prevent anyone looking back at them. Avatars may not remember the details, but they're shaped by their experiences, nonetheless.

And yet, despite the ramifications, many Euthanatoi would say that the Himalayan War, like any other *coumatha*, needed to happen. Through it, many groups with common interests discovered one another and united. The Ahl-i-Batin formed when Euthanatos soldiers chased Akashic refugees into the arms of the Darwushin, and the latter two groups bonded — literally and magically, creating new people who were neither Akashic nor Darwushin, but something new that became the Ahl-i-Batin.

The war also gave the Euthanatoi their first reckoning with their own dark side in the form of the Naraki, suffering souls who turned to Infernal powers to forget or feel strong and safe. The Euthanatoi executed many of them, but some disappeared and eluded detection. That lesson in dealing with their darkness and misdeeds serves the Euthanatoi well to this day: They police themselves rigorously. Naturally, that vigilance contributes to other Traditions' misperception that the Euthanatoi are especially vulnerable to the Fall.

Convocations

For a time, at the height of the Roman empire, groups of Chakravanti met, mingled, and came away wiser for it.

When the pagan emperors gave way to Christians, and Islam arose in the east, the Euthanatoi suffered. These monotheistic religions, focused on salvation, found little beauty in death or faith in the turning of the Wheel. They assuredly had no time for human beings assuming the heavenly duty of deciding who lived and died. The Celestial Choristers and Ahli-Batin who bolstered or led these groups had no love for the Euthanatoi. They drove 'Death-worshipping' cults underground, and the People of the Wheel scattered and became isolated.

This persisted until the 13th century, when the Persian merchant Sirdar Rustam used his wealth and ability to travel to go from group to group, connecting them and leaving them with a message of hope. "You are not alone." Chakravanti found Hellenistic chthonic cults like the Pomegranate Deme, who reconnected with the Aided of the Celtic nations.

In 1304, over a century before the Grand Convocation, Rustam brought his people together in Persia for the First Samashti: the Red Coumatha of the desert. Attendees wrote the Chodona, Chakradharma, or Eight Spoked Wheel of the Law, setting out the eight precepts that reflect the shared understanding and values of the different groups who gathered and formed the Chakravanti.

In the time between the Red Coumatha and the Grand Convocation, the Order of Reason arose. They disrupted fate, blocked the wheel, and the Chakravanti saw clearly how dangerous they were. When Sh'zar invited them to meet in Horizon, they came promptly.

In the jostling and politicking of the Convocation, the Chakravanti maintained their dignity. They changed their name to the Euthanatoi to ease the Akashayana's concerns at sharing space with their ancient enemies. They welcomed any group whose beliefs fit theirs, from the Madzimbabwe to the Mayan priests and priestesses that other factions shunned. They were a network, an alliance, not a rigid hierarchy. Typically for the Euthanatoi, appearances mattered far less to their delegates than communication, connection, and action. The other Traditions accepted them because they needed a left hand; a group willing to do the things that others preferred not to dirty their hands with.

To the Euthanatoi, this was business as usual. The Chodona instills in Euthanatoi the sublimation of strong emotions in favor of acceptance. Of finding joy and beauty in what must be done. They joined the Traditions, sent Cygnus Moro as their representative in the March of the Nine, and mourned his death at the hands of the Order of Reason. Moro's sacrifice cemented the Euthanatoi's place amongst the other Traditions. In his honor, the Albireo sect became diplomats who moved between different Traditions in their strongholds, accorded the respect due to such a position. It

only became apparent much later that the Albireo had also acted as the Traditions' Secret Police, and the aftershocks of that discovery still rock the Euthanatoi.

Empire

Whereas the Roman Empire united the Euthanatoi, European colonization almost destroyed them. The Mayans so recently incorporated into the Tradition suffered genocide at Spanish hands. The Portuguese slave trade in East Africa hit Great Zimbabwe hard, and for many years the Madzimbabwe had no time for Tradition agendas, too busy fighting for their survival and their people. Their beliefs traveled to the New World with slaves, and Madzimbabwe ideas persisted, blended with Voudoun and other religions, and created the Bata'a.

Elsewhere, the Ottoman Empire spread into Greece, and the British Empire assaulted India and Ireland. Not one of the Euthanatoi's cultural strongholds remained unscathed. The various branches of the Tradition fought back. The Thuggee became infamous in India as assassins, and the Aided, along with the Verbenae and even some Hermetics, railed against English rule in Ireland.

These conflicts were neither detached nor professional. Members of the Tradition lost friends and loved ones, early and unjustly. Vengeance bubbled up, in some cases overtaking any concerns of balance and justice. In this long period of struggle, many Euthanatoi became warriors, assassins, and gleeful killers.

The House of Helekar and World War II

Amidst this climate of oppression and resistance, the darkest inclinations of the Tradition took root. In 1709, Voormas ascended to leadership of the Euthanatos sect called the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy or the House of Helekar after their major chantry. Throughout history they'd hunted Naraki and the enemies of the Traditions, but now they turned toward murder for money, Quintessence, favors, or the pure joy murder brought. An alliance with House Janissary of the Order of Hermes helped to disguise their actions for many years, and then the Second World War distracted the rest of the Euthanatoi completely.

The Euthanatoi were the first to act against the Nazis. The commoditization of murder and the sheer scale of the slaughter galvanized the Euthanatoi while the rest of the Traditions were still scrambling to process the horror. While the rest of the Euthanatoi addressed this crisis of Sleeper evil, the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy thrived.

After the war Voormas took control of a tainted Node at Dachau. Mages in Germany reasoned that if anyone could

Future Fates: The Old Man or New Blood

Is Senex in charge? Is Senex even alive? If your chronicle incorporates the events of **Ascension**, the Old Man is dead and the Euthanatoi are looking for new leadership. Even if he's alive, Senex is one of the oldest mages in the world, and the most inscrutable. While he's occupied with an abstract plan that few others can comprehend, the rest of the Tradition is dealing with the issues outlined in Current Events. Plus, the Euthanatoi aren't exactly a monoculture. There are handfuls of factions with their own agendas. For practical purposes, unless your group is really into Tradition politics, it doesn't matter a huge amount who's nominally in charge.

be trusted with it, the Euthanatoi could. For almost fifty years they descended into depravity until the Hermetic Mark Hallward Gillan uncovered their links to the Janissaries, and the Janissaries to the Technocracy, and the Traditions acted. Voormas fled into the Hell of Being Skinned Alive, but his disciple Theora Hetirck couldn't escape capture. From her, the Euthanatoi learned of Voormas's plan to corrupt and destroy the entire world. Whether that was possible or not, their efforts cost the lives of countless Sleepers and the minds and Avatars of many mages.

To the Euthanatoi, the House of Helekar represents catastrophic failure. The fate of the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy is precisely why the Euthanatoi must be alert and compassionate, watching over their fellow mages and themselves. When they're not, the unthinkable happens. The

House of Helekar also provides the Euthanatoi a reminder they mustn't divorce themselves from life and the living. In isolation, the abhorrent can become commonplace and banal, and the consequences are dire.

After the fall of the House of Helekar, the strands of Fate become tangled and the Great Wheel tilts and teeters. Senex took Theora Hetirck as his own student, declaring her redeemed. She's certainly humble, at least compared to the Old Man, and she seems devoted to his plan. Exactly what the plan is, none beyond the two of them is sure. It involves the nodes Voormas corrupted, with which he planned to end the world, and the whispers that ripple through the Traditions speculate that it will restart the Great Wheel, which has stalled in the muck of the 21st century's reckoning with faith, magick, and science.

Current Events



Despite a close connection to their past, the Euthanatoi are focused on the here and now. Like any other Tradition, their history provides plenty of issues to address. Aside from the problems they've made for themselves, reality remains a hostile place for Tradition mages. From Apprentices and Initiates still learning what it means to wield Will like a scalpel to more powerful mages on the sharp end of the Ascension

War — no longer an abstract concept but a teeth-and-nails fight for the fate of the world — the world doesn't make space for navel gazing and contemplation of the Tradition's past mistakes.

The Euthanatoi have a word for a life-changing moment or event: Coumatha, meaning crossroads. Strictly speaking, it refers to the moment when a newly Awakened Euthanatos returns from their journey into the Shadowlands, but for hundreds of years it's referred to a broader concept: tipping points, when the whole world teeters on the brink of a new era. And that's happening now. The resurgence of religious

fervor, the impact of technology on magick, the rejuvenated struggle for control of consensual reality as mysticism and faith put cracks in the Technocracy's control. As the battle moves outside Europe, to nations like India where rapid economic and social change creates challenges and opportunities for the powers that be, the Great Wheel tilts and falters. The Agents of the Wheel know their duty is to keep it on the right path.

But what's right? For Sleepers, embracing faith or mysticism, and incidentally making life easier for Tradition mages, often goes alongside rejecting science. And that's not necessarily in a Sleeper's best interests. The Technocracy's brand of science keeps Sleepers under tight control, but science — with or without the Technocracy — keeps them safe from disease and hardship. Maybe the Traditions can reclaim science, maybe even by weakening the Technocracy. Maybe not. Just destroying obstacles to the Wheel's turning won't be enough to resolve this dilemma: This problem demands an active choice, and that's not what the People of the Wheel have trained themselves to do.



The biggest problem the Tradition faces is how to adapt to a more active, decisive role. How to grow. They're well positioned to do it. The Euthanatoi have been changing, growing, and redefining throughout their existence. They've always welcomed new groups, bringing new ideas, from the First Samashti onward. Other Traditions, and groups among the Disparates, are already wrangling with what the world could, and should, look like as the millennium rolls into its third decade.

Unfortunately, the Euthanatoi aren't in a great position to reach out for advice. The other Traditions have always kept them at a distance, and the discovery of the House of Helekar in the late 20th century made a lukewarm relationship much colder. With Theora Hetirck acting as Senex's agent and assistant, it's impossible to forget what happened and how far the House of Helekar fell. For many, it's also impossible to believe the rest of the Euthanatoi are untouched by that corruption. To outsiders, making Voormas and his cult scapegoats to protect the rest of the Tradition seems very much like something the Euthanatoi would do. That couldn't be further from the truth (unless a corrupt Tradition rotting from the top down sounds like fun for

your game), but in this case that hardly matters. The onus is on the Euthanatoi to prove their innocence.

The sceptics include the Akashayana and Order of Hermes, who have old grudges against the Euthanatoi. The Euthanatoi have maintained a truce but never a friendship with the Akashayana since the Grand Convocation, and the Akashics are unlikely to embrace their old enemies now. The Order of Hermes have a justified grievance over the Euthanatoi's role in the destruction of House Janissary and the assumption of the role of 'Tradition secret police.' Between Avatars with centuries of memories of conflict and a resentful and mistrustful Order, it's not a good time for the Euthanatoi to reach out to either group but getting either one on side could be a powerful indicator that the Euthanatoi are everything they claim to be: fair, empathetic, and in service to the Wheel.

On the other hand, the other Traditions are reshaping themselves as surely as the Euthanatoi are, learning and growing into the new millennium. In some respects, it's an excellent time to break old habits and make new friends. Plus, House Janissary ceased to be over two decades ago. It's ancient history to mages who Awakened this side of the millennium.

Factions and the Euthanatos

As noted throughout, the Chakravanti are as much an assortment of individuals with a firm foundation in understanding the necessity of the Wheel as they are a formal Tradition. Their factions follow a similar structure, organized around common belief structures more than political aims. The primary factions within the Tradition are the **Aided** whose beliefs draw from Celtic influence, the **Chakravanti** who form the largest faction and trace their lineage back to the earliest Thanatoic cults of India, the **Hierochthonoi** who practice and preserve Hellenic rituals, the **Madzimbabwe** who focus on ancestor reverence through practices traced back to ancient Africa, and the **Vrati** who focus their efforts on Tradition-wide needs and interfacing with other Traditions.

Within those factions lie a host of sub-factions and groups that can range from a single collection of Hierochthonoi mages observing obscure Chthonic rites in a remote Chantry to a global group that shares a common Celtic root to their practice, but little communication. So long as the Wheel is maintained, the methods and trappings of politics mean little to most Chakravanti.

The question of why and how the Euthanatoi ended up as enforcers for the Traditions is more relevant by the day. The position makes their peers resent them and violates important tenets of their beliefs. There are plenty among the Tradition who feel that the Council of Nine has taken advantage of them for too long. They use the Euthanatoi as their left hand, doing all the things they'd rather not take on themselves. And the Euthanatoi have let them, in the name of cooperation.

Maybe, some suggest, it's time that stopped. The Euthanatoi are agents of the Great Wheel, not cops. Their job isn't to police their peers and allies and stick a knife in their backs if they step out of line. It's to make sure the Wheel turns freely, as it should. Sometimes those two roles lead to the same result, but the distinction matters. If the Euthanatoi stop being useful, will they still have a place in the Council? Does it matter? Is there a home for them amongst the Disparate Alliance? Walking away from the Council of Nine isn't unheard of. The Batini did it and so did the Solificati. The Hollow Ones got close to joining, or at least becoming mascots, then walked away. Leaving would be the end of an era, but nobody knows better than the Euthanatoi that endings are just transitions.

The problem is the Euthanatoi aren't a single entity. 'Tradition' has always been a convenient term to describe half a dozen or more magickal practices with a shared understanding of some hard truths. They're composed of sects from around the world, with different cultural roots, different experiences, and differing degrees of tolerance for any kind of central authority. While some parts of the Tradition – survivors of Horizon, older mages, or those who've been close to powerful members of other Traditions – are worrying about their reputation in a power structure that may be on its last legs, Tradition members around the world go about their business, oblivious and uninterested.

For many, their experience of the Tradition goes no further than their mentor and fellow students. These are the bonds that matter to the Euthanatoi.

Since the Grand Convocation, the Pomegranate Deme, Aided, Madzimbabwe, and numerous other sects have suffered blame for the Himalayan War. Most of the Tradition had nothing to do with the Albireo's activities and didn't even know about them. What binds the Euthanatoi together is a shared acknowledgement that they do what is needful and do it without joy. Some of them have as much in common with other groups as with the rest of the Euthanatoi – it's a broad church. Some are fighting for Ascension; some are fighting for the future of the world; others are fighting smaller but no less important local battles against people, programs, and pervasive ideas that are harmful or regressive.

At some point it might become more convenient for the Tradition to disband: Why should an Aided in Boston take responsibility for something a Dacoit in northern India did thousands of years ago? Why should a Madzimbabwe – ignored by the Tradition for years – defend a Knight of Radamanthys from accusations of overstepping their authority?

Alternatively, if not disband, it might be time to rebrand. Many Euthanatoi lean toward returning to the Tradition's original name, Chakravanti, or the newer Niyavanti to make the statement that they're agents of fate, not executioners and assassins. The Euthanatoi fundamentally oppose retaining old ideas and structures simply out of habit or nostalgia. If the concept of the Euthanatoi has outlived its usefulness, maybe it's time to deliver the Good Death.

It bears repeating that, as they always have, most Euthanatoi have their own preoccupations. Medics deal with epidemics as best they can, vigilantes root out predators and bring down corrupt officials and organizations. On a

day-to-day level, the main concern of most members of the Tradition is restoring the world to its proper state of being. That requires managing other mages who take issue with the concept of the Euthanatoi, whether it's relevant to the Euthanatoi they're currently interacting with or not. If that

wasn't enough, they're still dealing with the many suffering, traumatized Avatars affected by the Himalayan War, which crop up in newly Awakening Shravaka. Contemplating what they call themselves and what their greater purpose should be is a luxury few can afford.

Notable Personalities

The Euthanatoi are a complicated and diverse group, best understood by example. The mages described here are those who hold power or seek it, and those who exemplify or defy its values.

The Thistle of Pwyll

Born in Cardiff as Carys Poole, the Thistle of Pwyll is eighteen years old, and she's trouble. She claims she's the reincarnation of a young Aided who attended the Grand Convocation.

Thorn might be a better name for her because that's what she's been to Senex and Theora Hetirck. Not a detail gets past her; not a question goes unasked. The Old Man seems amused by her. Maybe he underestimates her: plenty of people do. She's easy to ignore until she starts asking questions.

The Thistle of Pwyll communicates by raven. That's what the rapidly spreading legends about her say. And it's true; she does have several domesticated, uncannily intelligent birds who do her bidding, crossing great distances like well-trained homing pigeons. Like most people in the developed world, she mostly communicates by instant messaging and email, reserving the birds for those times when deniability is paramount.

Nature: Benefactor

Demeanor: Kid

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation (Debate) 4, Appearance 2, Perception (Detail) 4, Intelligence (Logic) 5, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 2, Awareness 2, Cosmology 2, Computer 3, Empathy (Interpersonal Psychology) 4, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 3, Expression 3, Investigation (Deduction) 4, Meditation 2, Occult 2, Research (Online) 4, Subterfuge 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Familiar 4, Mentor 5, Past Lives 4

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Ratings: 0

Arete: 3

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 2, Life 3, Prime 1

Attacks/Powers: See and communicate through ravens; sense lies; beginner's luck; heal self and others; disrupt bodily systems (internal bleeding, organ failure, etc.)

Equipment: Cellphone, laptop, numerous tame corvids, bird and animal bones, multitool.

Image: Carys is a chubby, Caucasian teenager who uses a wheelchair thanks to a childhood spinal cord injury. She wears loose, nondescript clothes in neutral colors, and apart from the chilling intensity of her gaze, which looks right through a person, she's the definition of underwhelming.

Roleplaying Notes: The original Thistle of Pwyll stayed in Horizon asking questions for a decade and rooted out five spies. The new Thistle has the same infinite curiosity, eidetic memory, and contrarian attitude. The Thistle's good at connecting with people; her wry sense of humor endears her to people quickly, and her insights make them loyal. The Thistle recognizes that the world is on the brink of the next Coumatha, and she's determined to understand it, the better to minimize the danger the fallout poses to Sleepers.

Focus: *Creation is Innately Divine and Alive* (**Mage 20**, p. 569); *Witchcraft* (**Mage 20**, p. 584) — blood and fluids, bones and remains, drugs and poisons, knots and rope, sacrifices and offerings, voice, writings and inscriptions.

Shweta Nagasar

A middle-class graduate student of social work in Mumbai, Shweta felt little connection to ancient mystickal practices, until her Atman began to dance. Shweta sought out priests and mystics, seers, and secret, hidden cults until she found Amrita, the Euthanatos who became her mentor.

The more they spoke, the more Amrita's ideas resonated with Shweta. The concept of the Great Wheel made sense to her. It fit with her ideals of phasing out regressive ideas, pushing the world forward. Those ideas, and the suffering they led to, came from British rule. Shweta wasn't surprised to learn how tightly the British Empire was intertwined with the Technocracy and its predecessor, the Order of Reason.

Her Diksha was formal and careful. She lay down on the floor of her Acarya's sanctum, drank a dose of poison, and took her first steps into the Shadowlands. When she died, Shweta's Atman awoke, coming back to awareness with a

scream that wiped out Shweta's memories of herself. Shweta's Atman dragged her across every battlefield on which it ever fought and killed, throughout the six hundred years of the Himalayan War. Shweta encountered every ghostly victim and met their eyes, heard her Avatar lament, recriminate, and justify what its former incarnations had done.

While her Avatar suffered, Shweta accepted. Sometimes deaths were an unavoidable outcome, the logical next step in a chain of causation. Other times, a murder saved other lives. Shweta met her Avatar's guilt with compassion. Her Avatar's pain eased, and she returned to the world of the living.

She understood now. To serve the Wheel was to take on the burden of judgement, and hope compassion and conscience kept pride in check.

Shweta's an activist working with lower caste women to improve their lives and organizing protests and movements for social change. She prefers to destroy ideas than people, but a sharp knife is a tool like any other, and she'll wield it if she must.

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Activist

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma (Bold) 4, Manipulation (Eloquence) 4, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Academics (Sociology) 3, Art 1, Drive 2, Empathy 3, Esoterica 3, Etiquette 2, Expression (Counseling) 4, Law 2, Leadership 2, Melee 3, Occult 3, Politics 2, Research 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 4, Contacts 2, Cult 2, Resources 2, Status 3

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 2

Spheres: Entropy 2, Mind 2, Time 2

Attacks/Powers: Read surface thoughts, implant mental impressions, create empathic bond, improve social skills, pre/postcognition, manipulate probability

Equipment: Cellphone, burner phone, university ID, fixed blade combat knife, folding karambit, 'go bag' (clothes, cash, toiletries, passport).

Image: Shweta's a young Indian woman with short, dark hair who mixes traditional Indian fashion and jewelry with jeans and trainers. She's not a fan of labels.

Roleplaying Notes: Shweta's quietly confident. She lets louder, more aggressive people burn themselves out before she has her say then eloquently states her case. She's a good conversationalist who's interested in everything and everyone, and a great listener. She's open minded and willing to change her views based on new information, but she's not a pushover: She knows

right and wrong when she sees them.

Focus: *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos (Mage 20, p. 569); Faith (Mage 20, p. 569) — solitary rites, offerings and sacrifice, ordeals and exertions, prayers and invocations, symbols, thought forms, voice.*

Lewis Hook

Lewis's parents, teachers, partners in crime, and therapists expected, when he went to India to find himself after his third stint in rehab, that he'd end up dead in a gutter. They were right. He got so high his heart stopped. The people he was partying with took him to a folk healer with a reputation for holding life and death in the palm of her hand.

He came back to life screaming, with white streaks in his hair, and promised to reform. He implored the woman who revived him to take him in, teach him, and against her better judgement, she did. She taught the newly Awakened Lewis the basics of healing and harming, how to perceive fate and weave it. He wasted the gift like every other precious thing he'd ever received.

Lewis sold his skills for drugs, money, respect, and admiration. Everything his mentor tried to instill in him about duty passed straight through his pretty head and out the other side because Lewis Hook is nobody's servant, not even the Great Wheel. He's a selfish asshole who can always justify one more abuse of power. He used his magick to gamble, to cheat his way out of debts, and to straight up kill for money. Somehow, he keeps surviving even though he's surely overdue for an appointment with karma. Lewis pulls off big wins, enormous heists, the most challenging assassinations and lives off the profits. He's famous for his skills amongst the kind of people looking to hire them.

He's a disgrace to his mentor, and he's living on borrowed time. She's looking for him, and when she finds him, she'll undo the mistake she made and gently and compassionately put him to death. She hopes he'll do better in his next incarnation. It's unfortunate, but no mistake is beyond correction.

Nature: Bon Vivant

Demeanor: Loner

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity (Smooth) 4, Stamina (Tireless) 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation (Charm) 4, Appearance (Hollywood Heartthrob) 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Drive 3, Firearms (Pistols) 4, Medicine 2, Meditation 1, Melee 2, Science 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Innocent) 4

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Contacts 2, Resources 3

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1 (leather clothing)

Arete: 4

Spheres: Entropy 4, Life 1, Prime 2, Time 3

Attacks/Powers: Uncannily accurate attacks, called shots, humiliating clumsiness (on his opponents), pure luck, foresight, sense living creatures, vicious weapons (Aggravated damage), impossible speed.

Equipment: Cellphone, burner phone, array of weapons, foci, lottery tickets (miraculously, they're all winners).

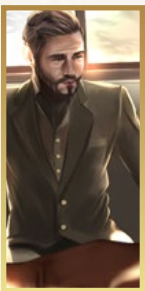
Image: Lewis is tall, dark, and handsome, and he knows it. Tattooed and insouciant, Lewis likes nice things:

expensive watches, tasteful jewelry, and this season's clothes.

Roleplaying Notes: Lewis exudes a sort of oily grace that's more charming than it has a right to be. He takes life as it comes, confident he's smart and talented enough to ooze his way out of any problems that come his way. When he's coked up (frequently), he's insufferable, talking constantly and listening never.

Focus: A Mechanistic Cosmos (**Mage 20**, p. 568); *The Art of Desire* (**Mage 20**, p. 574) — cards and dice, gestures, eye contact, money and wealth, sacred iconography, voice, weapons.

Paradigm



Attempting to define a set of practices that apply to the entire Tradition is fruitless. Foci, tools, and individual beliefs are bound to vary. One of the most important aspects of the Euthanatoi is that they're not a unified whole but a set of disparate groups with more commonalities than differences.

This also means that the Euthanatos concept of authority is a little like a cat's idea of ownership: They'll acknowledge someone as superior when appropriate, but they put far more trust in their own — or their trusted friends or mentor's — ideas of right, wrong, and duty than anyone else's. Trusting others too much leads to groups like Voormas's House of Helekar going unchecked; not listening at all runs the risk of a mage becoming the next Voormas.

Euthanatoi Paradigms

The Euthanatoi, whatever their cultural influences, have several things in common, and these foundations are the basis of their paradigms.

The Great Wheel Turns. Closely related to the idea of fate, the Euthanatoi believe that there is a correct course, a forward motion to events. That doesn't always mean progress as historians would describe it, but the Wheel turns and there's a natural end to all things, from human lives to political systems and philosophies. Everything runs its course and it's simply wrong to let anything linger after its allotted time. Without death, there can be no change, only collapse: stagnation, fear, and hardship. That also means that nobody should die *before* their time. As Ranjit proved in the plague that started the Himalayan War, those destined to live require as much aid as those destined to move on.

Although the Euthanatoi are best known for ending lives, that's not the extent of their duties. Euthanatoi can, and do,

break down corrupt systems no longer fit for purpose, and masters of Entropy can unravel poisonous, rancid ideas. The fallout from ending a life can be vast, and the consequences of destroying institutions and concepts greater still. These works are for the wisest and most judicious of mages, who know to undertake them carefully and slowly. A player character could be one of the aforementioned patient mages working toward this goal, or a young firebrand still learning balance and restraint, determined to change things *now*.

- **Rebirth.** After death comes rebirth. The concept goes by many names from reincarnation to conservation of energy, but the Euthanatoi know for sure that death is not the end. It's a closing door, a return to the earth. This belief offers consolation when the agents of the Wheel must take a life: They're not ending, only facilitating a transition.
- **The Diksha.** Every Euthanatos has died and returned. They have, in a sense, put their money where their mouth is. They understand what it means for a life to end and what awaits on the other side. In an ideal world the Diksha is carefully orchestrated, overseen by an attentive Acarya, and undergone only when the Shrivaka knows how to navigate it. In practice life is messy, and many mages find their way to the Euthanatoi after a near-death experience from which they struggle back alone.
- **Asceticism.** The executioner's role is a hardship. It's suffering. It's willingly taking on a job that most people can't bear to do. Doing so without pride or passion is an important part of the Chodona. Euthanatoi strive to moderate their feelings, never straying into excess — but they also take a quiet pride in their work. Keeping the Wheel on its path, despite the weighty burden of doing so, is a kind of beauty and

a source of joy. That doesn't mean all Euthanatoi are teetotalers or straight edge (though some are), or that they're all supremely self-aware. It means they know they walk a tightrope between depression and sadism, and they're pretty good at making sure they don't tip off to either side.

- **Mentorship.** The Euthanatoi rely on their fellow Tradition members more than most outsiders realize. The bond between teacher and student lasts a lifetime and keeps both mages from straying off the path of

duty into hubris and malice. This may sound like a behavior, not a belief, but it's rooted in the concept of duty: When a Euthanatos goes solo, it's usually a sign that they're straying from the Chodona.

Whichever sect of the Euthanatoi your character comes from, the best resource for developing how they see the world are the myths and folklore of those cultures. Study Hindu Vedas and Indian epics, read Greek and Celtic myths, learn about the civilization of Great Zimbabwe and listen to Shona funeral songs. Remember there's no such thing



as a 'standard' Euthanatos. They're informed by the culture they come from, or one that they've studied, as well as their own brushes with Death and Fate.

Focus: Sacrifice

When the Euthanatoi interact with the world of the living, they use wisdom, faith, high ritual, and an array of other tools. When they interact with the dead, they speak their language. The dead crave little and need less, but the currencies they accept are respect and Quintessence.



Sacrifices denote the first and can be a vessel for the second. Whether the sacrifice is a burned offering, a good bottle of whisky, or blood, it's the respect behind it that matters.

Rotes

Some Euthanatos rotes originate in a single sect and make their way through the whole Tradition. Most are examples of simultaneous evolution: Similar needs and philosophies give rise to the same effect under different names.

Blood for the Ghosts

(•• Entropy/ •• Prime/ •• Spirit)

This effect's name comes from classical Greek myth, but the practice of offering sacrifices and gifts to those already dead recurs in Celtic and African traditions too. The mage offers up a sacrifice of fresh, warm human blood – or any other vessel for Quintessence – and calls forth ghosts or orisha from the world of the dead. The sacrifice makes them biddable, and in some traditions obedient, and a mage can converse or interact with them. Ghosts summoned with this ritual give information more freely, and sometimes without asking for anything in return.

Causing a ghost to take a material form requires Spirit 3. Determining whether a spectral informant is lying needs an additional Entropy 1 effect.

The Last Sacrifice

(•••• Entropy/ •• Spirit)

Death is not the end, only the beginning of the next stage. When an agent of the Wheel kills someone, they like to make sure it sticks and that their target doesn't linger as a ghost. This effect is most often a gesture of respect: a final gift to bid farewell to the spirit and send them on their way. Depending on the mage's sect, the sacrifice might take the form of coins for the ferryman, elaborate funeral rites and cremation of the body, or the gift of grave goods for interment with the corpse. Some Euthanatoi understand it as a deal, or even a way of paying off an otherwise unquiet spirit.

Whatever the intent, it works. After a properly delivered Last Sacrifice, a spirit moves on to its next stage of existence, not hanging around as a ghost. Spirits dismissed in this way never become wraiths (or spectres) and therefore can't return to the world of the living, even briefly. Dead men tell no tales.

Flaw

The Avatars of those who participated in the Himalayan War don't forget the experience. This Flaw is especially appropriate for Euthanatoi and Akashayana, but the new vessels for those Avatars could be in any Tradition (or Craft, or Convention).

Scarred Avatar

(2 or 4 pt. Supernatural Flaw)

Your character's Avatar fought in the Himalayan War... again, and again, and again. Whether or not your character knows why, there are circumstances that cause their Avatar an intense negative reaction, anywhere between aversion and panic.

- (••) The trigger is uncommon (storms, a certain person, dead bodies) and the reaction mild. You must spend a point of Quintessence to cast a magickal effect while you're in the vicinity of the source of your Avatar's response. Quintessence spent this way doesn't affect the Difficulty of the roll.
- (••••) The trigger is common (a specific time of day, fire, a physical characteristic) and the reaction severe. You must spend a point of Quintessence and a point of Willpower to cast a magickal effect while you're in the vicinity of the source of your Avatar's response. Quintessence and Willpower spent this way don't affect the Difficulty of the roll.

Wonders

All things break and eventually fade, so Euthanatos Wonders aren't common. Those they make serve a defined purpose.

•• Antaratma

Arete 4, Quintessence 10, Background Cost 8 pts.

With a name meaning 'spirit inside' or 'conscience' in Hindi, an antaratma is precisely that: a message from a Chakravanti's Acarya that serves to remind them of their commitment to the Chodona to be open-hearted yet controlled; compassionate yet constant. An antaratma takes the form of a talisman, hand-crafted by the Acarya, which bears recordings of key precepts in the Acarya's words, tailored to the recipient of the Wonder. Some Euthanatoi wear the antaratma as a tattoo, and mentors with a technological bent might code it as an app on their student's phone.

An antaratma helps a Euthanatos resist the pervasive effects of *jhor*, also sometimes known as Morbidity (**Mage 20**, p. 558), but is equally effective at resisting all forms of Quiet.

When a Paradox discharge or other effect would push a mage into Quiet, reduce the severity (**Mage 20**, p. 556) by one level for every two successes on the antaratma's Arete roll (Difficulty 7).

Unlikely Allies



Current Events make it clear the Euthanatoi need allies. Where they're likely to find them depends on where the Tradition as a whole, and the Euthanatoi in your chronicle, stand on matters like remaining in the Tradition, what the most pressing fights are for them, and external pressures: the Euthanatoi are unaccustomed to looking for allies and might need a nudge to make friends.

The Disparate Alliance

The Madzimbabwe are the Euthanatoi's best hope of connecting with the Disparate Alliance. They're the ones who spent longest detached from Tradition politics and can best claim to understand the Disparates' perception that the Traditions are inward-looking and arrogant.

The Bata'a and the Madzimbabwe have history. They have shared beliefs, shared culture, and the way the Madzimbabwe tell it, it was their magick that went with their enslaved families, friends, and neighbors to the New World, pointing to shared philosophies, approaches, and tools as evidence. That is... not how the Bata'a tell it. Their magick has evolved down different lines over the centuries, under different influences. The Bata'a feel little to no allegiance to the people who let them be taken over the ocean. They have one thing in common with the Euthanatoi: both groups are supremely self-reliant, which doesn't facilitate striking up easy friendships.

The other point of connection between the Euthanatoi and the Disparates is the Ngoma. Both these groups of African mages attended the Great Convocation and were subject to the European mages' obsessive need to categorize everyone who attended. The Ngoma tend to look at the Madzimbabwe with faint disdain: the Ngoma rejected joining the Dreamspeakers, while the Madzimbabwe accepted a place in the Euthanatoi. The Madzimbabwe can talk all they like about how the name never mattered nor changed them, and how the fit with the Euthanatoi was comfortable. How they felt welcomed, not pushed. It doesn't change the fact that the Ngoma have five hundred more years of independence.

Of course, that doesn't apply to the handful of Ngoma who accepted a place as a Hermetic House in recent history. For them, the Euthanatoi are a useful ally amongst the Traditions, and one who might even understand that the Traditions will never command their new adoptees' full loyalty, at least in the near future.

Meanwhile, the Euthanatoi and the Sisters of Hippolyta might, if they looked past generalizations, realize they have more things in common than some shared mythology. The Sisters are healers and advocates, while perception casts the Euthanatoi as dealers of death, their opposite. But that's not who the Euthanatoi are; they're just not about lost causes. Blasting away moribund ideas and doing right by the people those ideas have injured is a sturdy foundation for an alliance. Find them both a cause to care about, and they could be a dangerous force for change.

The Itz'at

The Euthanatoi haven't yet contacted the Itz'at. Most Euthanatoi don't know who they are. Some with close connections with Disparates, or former Disparates now in the Traditions, have come across the name. Amongst those who've heard of the Itz'at, some have clear past lives and eloquent Avatars. Those mages, including the Thistle of Pwyll, recall the Mayan mystics pushed into the arms of the Euthanatoi at the Grand Convocation. Some hope the Itz'at are lost cousins; others are aware that their sects were too busy fighting their own battles to support their Mayan peers against colonizers. To the Euthanatoi, the Itz'at represent either natural allies or a chance to atone for past mistakes. At the very least, they might be able to shed light on what happened to the mages who were, for the briefest of moments, part of the Euthanatoi.

To the Itz'at, the Euthanatoi are nobody. If the Craft were interested in the Traditions, they'd have made overtures to them already. If they are, or knew, the Mayan mages who were at the Grand Convocation there's no reason they would recognize them in 21st century Euthanatoi. After centuries of life, it's dubious they'd feel any meaningful attachment to them anyway. The major obstacle to this alliance is that the Itz'at don't want anything from the Euthanatoi. It's an unrequited crush, not a relationship.

The Itz'at could be a good narrative tool to remind a group of mages that sometimes their own Will isn't enough to get what they want. They're also an excellent way to remind player characters that the Traditions are utterly irrelevant to many mages in the world. It might be a useful perspective.

Navalon

The measured ascetics of the Euthanatoi don't seem like a natural fit with the starry-eyed idealism of Navalon. This splinter group of Technocrats are crusaders, convinced they can live by, and disseminate, an archaic code of

chivalry and a sense of duty. But there's common ground to be found if someone goes looking. Navalon understand duty and obligation, or say they do. They share a sense of humility with the Euthanatoi, on their better days. And they really want to make the world better. Frequently, their idea of better — less exploitation, more freedom, longer and happier lives — intersects with the Chakravanti's idea of an unimpeded turning of the Wheel. That can't last: Navalon don't understand that death follows life, and all things end. Their idealism doesn't allow for it. However, that doesn't mean they can't be allies of convenience.

Two major challenges have prevented that from happening so far. Navalon is a British movement, though it's attracting members further afield. They're also a movement that looks back with misty-eyed nostalgia at the British Empire — the same Empire that trampled the Aided and every Indian sect of the Euthanatoi. That's a fundamental difference to get past. Even the Navalon members self-aware enough to not proudly write themselves into a white savior narrative have a lot of explaining to do.

The other stumbling block is that the last time the Euthanatoi thought they'd found someone they thought understood them, it kick-started the Himalayan War, and nobody wants a second one. Euthanatoi have to tread carefully around these would-be heroes, and it might not be worth it.

The Technocracy

As hard as it is for most Tradition mages to admit it, the Technocracy is no more a monolith than the Euthanatoi. OK, slightly more. But the Technocracy outside Europe and North America have different relationships with the Sleepers whose lives they invisibly steer. They're still counter to everything the Euthanatoi stand for, but in Asia especially they have a sophisticated approach to blending technology with local values and needs. They're not always the oppressive, jackbooted authority figures they've proven to be in America. It's a little easier for the Euthanatoi to

tolerate them in places like India. Occasionally, it might even be conceivable that they work together against a greater threat. Nephandi, demons, monsters, and other threats to the natural order can all inspire a temporary truce.

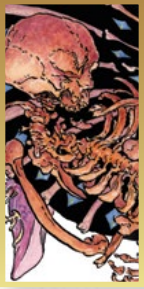
Some branches of the Technocracy are easier to work with than others. The Progenitors' entire philosophy is about preventing the Wheel from turning. Life extension, forced mutation, and cloning have no place in a world where the Wheel turns as it should. Even apparently benevolent Progenitor achievements like fast-growing, genetically modified crops are disastrous to the Euthanatoi. The planet is overcrowded and becoming even more so. The Euthanatoi know death is natural. Forcing people onward through life with no quality is cruel.

The Syndicate, on the other hand, have more in common with the Euthanatoi than either group would like to admit. The Syndicate understand, just as the Euthanatoi do, that what goes up must come down. They know the difference between personal vendettas and pragmatic decisions. They're the left hand of the Technocracy. The enforcers. The ones who do the dirty work. Sometimes, they even come from similar backgrounds. A Vegas gambler with a lucky streak a mile wide might end up in the Syndicate or as a Euthanatos Lakshmist. A mob hit man — a professional, one who didn't enjoy his work too much but got shit done — would be equally welcome on either side of the divide. Hell, they might even have a buddy on the other side.

Give a Euthanatos mage and a Syndicate agent the same problem to solve, and they'll probably find a similar solution. They're both going for the smallest possible adjustment with the biggest impact, and if that adjustment involves a bullet in a brainpan, so be it.

And that unpleasant truth is why most Euthanatoi and Syndicate agents swear a blue streak they have nothing in common. Neither one likes looking at their own ugly reflection.

Future Fates



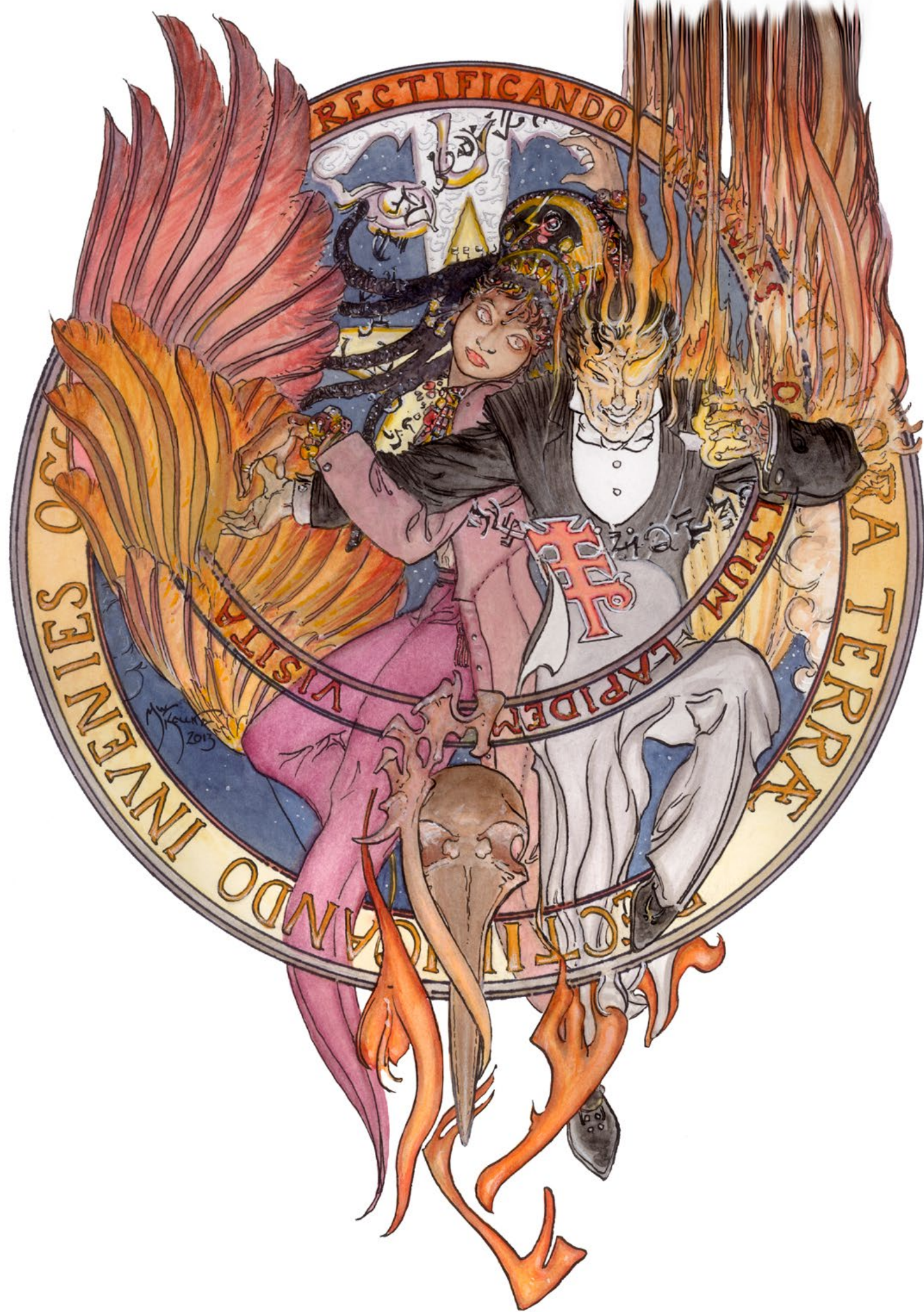
The Current Events and Unlikely Allies sections above already cover a lot of possibilities for the Euthanatoi. Fittingly for the Tradition who identified and named *jhor*, this section presents some darker fates. They're not the most obvious future paths, but they're possible and there's room for a lot of strong stories down these dark alleys.

There's nothing except the Euthanatoi's say-so to guarantee that the House of Helekar was the sum of Nephandic corruption in the Euthanatoi. The loud, public action against Voormas was very unlike their usual style of small nudges and subtle gestures. In many ways it would make more sense if it was a feint to distract attention from other problems. If you're playing in a timeline where the Ascension War is lost and the Sleepers are spiritual zombies turning the consensus into a tarpit of stifling limitations, it makes even more sense. The Euthanatoi might have turned to dark powers for a way to shock the world out of its stupor, or just out of anger that

the Great Wheel is thoroughly stuck. There might even be truth to the rumor that Theora Hetirck isn't as redeemed as the Old Man says; hell, maybe he's corrupted too. Maybe his grand plan to move the world on isn't so different to Voormas's, just better executed.

Alternatively, the Albireo might have a problem with the prevailing sentiment that the Euthanatoi shouldn't be the Council of Nine's attack dogs and police. They've been very happy in that role. They might split, maybe to join the Order of Hermes (who seem happy to take in waifs and strays right now) ... or just kill off dissenting voices in the Tradition. A Euthanatoi civil war is a great play-space for cold war drama, suspicion, shifting alliances, and betrayal. A less extreme version could play out if the New Horizon Council narrative leads the Euthanatoi to distance themselves from their associations with death and embrace change, with parts of the Tradition eager to move forward and others fearful of what fate awaits the world if they set down their ages-old burden.



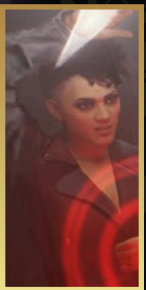


ORDER OF HERMES

"I do not manifest change. I become change."

— Thrice-Great Hermes

Overview



Cagliostro, Merlin, Paracelsus, Pythagoras, Saint-Germain, Solomon, Thrice-Great Hermes. These mages are united by one common fraternity—The Order of Hermes—and one common phrase—"I am become the Word." The founders of the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions. The architects of the structure of the Council. The formulators and conceptualizers of the nine spheres of magick. The Order of Hermes can claim all these accolades and more. They are the largest, most organized, possibly wealthiest, and (they would say) the most influential Tradition. They have the most Masters and Archmages, the most Chantries and strongholds, and the greatest libraries.

The Order claims to be the oldest Tradition, having existed in some form since the creation of written language. They are the original codifiers of magickal study, founders (they would say) of Western mysticism and (in their opinion) leaders of the traditions. They are the creators of common Tradition practices such as certámen and the ultimate punishment of Gilgul. For many, the Order defines the word mage.

The Order has also endured some of the greatest catastrophes in the history of the Traditions. Tremere was a Hermetic mage, and generations of betrayal, war, and death resulting from his actions are their responsibility. The heavy hand they wielded on the Sleepers during the Mythic Age is more or less solely responsible for the foundation of the Order of Reason which would grow into the Technocracy. If you are using the relevant Future Fate, infighting among their own led to the death of their

most powerful Archmage, the loss of their greatest Chantry, and was primarily responsible for the fall of Horizon to the Technocracy. All these disasters and more belong to the Order.

If choosing a singular word to sum up this Tradition, the likely choice is "pride." Pride led the Order to its greatest achievements and precipitated its greatest failures. Pride also keeps the order at the heart of the Traditions. The Order believes without them there is no Council of Nine. They are the glue holding the Traditions together and the most fervent supporter of the Council. Pride also drives the Order to force its methods and ideals on the other Traditions and causes many Hermetics to believe only they truly understand what it means to be a mage.

Internally, the Order is infamous as a shark tank of political machination, crushing bureaucracy, inflexible discipline, and exhausting apprenticeships. Perhaps less rigid and obtuse than in centuries past, this reputation remains well earned by the Hermetics. Consisting of 13 houses under the banner of the Order of Hermes, the praxes and methods of its members are widely varied but united under a common goal.

Thus, despite their many flaws and many setbacks, the Order emerges from the ashes of the past as a phoenix, bursting with fire and vitality. The shattering of the Order acts as the shattering of shackles, freeing the remaining Hermetics to rebuild on the storied foundations of conviction, learning, brilliance, Word, Will, and Force. From the ruins rises a new Order, never giving in, never giving up, and never losing sight of their ultimate goal: the fabled ideal of the City of Pymander, guiding all of humanity to Ascension.

History



Down through the ages, the Order of Hermes, in one form or another, influenced humanity's entire experience of magick. The various hermetic Houses are known to argue at length about what events are or are not of import. Entire convocations debate nothing but this. Apprentices can find a complete history in that venerable tome the Hornbook penned by Master Alonius.

In the spirit of pragmatism, presented here is an annotated timeline of key events as relates to the Order of Hermes.

Bygone Origins

Mages have existed as long as humans have walked the earth, and the Order claims to have influenced events just as long. As far as recorded events are concerned, the beginnings of the Order originate with the invention of written language. Records exist dating back to Sumer, Babylon, and ancient Egypt.

In ancient times, writing itself was a form of willworking and magic. Only the elite learned the secrets of decoding markings put on papyrus, stone, and clay. These earliest occult priesthoods were the foundation for the current Hermetic mystery orders. Most written accounts of this time are lost, but magickal workings by Masters of the Order reveal some insight.

Sometime around 2500 BCE, Djhowtey and Sesheta, an Awakened couple, become the quiet voices whispering into the ears of pharaohs for five centuries. They make allies of the Bubasti, shapeshifting felines of the region, help spread the Phoenician alphabet to Egyptian scribes, and Awaken many mages. The mystery cult they create influences Egyptian society for centuries. The ultimate fate of these two is unknown. They fade from the historical record when Pharaoh Amenemhet I dies. After they disappear, the people merge their legend into a deity: Thoth, god of magic, wisdom, and knowledge.

Sometime around 950 BCE the Archmage Solomon rules Israel. The first to truly master the conjuration and control of Umbrood, he writes three magickal books. Two of these tomes, the unabridged versions of the *Greater* and *Lesser Keys of Solomon*, serve as manuals on binding spirits in the Order to this day.

Sometime around 560 BCE the mage Pythagoras of Samos travels to Egypt, which by now is influenced by Hellenic thought. He becomes an initiate in the cult of Thoth,

which is on the decline. He studies there for 15 years before returning to Greece. He spreads his new ideas in Athens, Thebes, and other centers of learning. Pythagoras develops a large following from cults devoted to the great god Hermes. After another 20 years, he forms his own mystery cult in what later becomes Southern Italy. His cult devotes itself to ascetic mysticism, math, astronomy, and music. 25 years later, Pythagoras dies an old man. Most educated people of the time are familiar with the teachings of the new cult of Hermes, including Plato.

Around 332 BCE Alexander of Macedonia conquers Egypt. By now the cult of Hermes is split into the Acousmatics, devoted to the philosophy and teachings of Pythagoras, and the Mathematic faction, devoted to number theory and music. Alexander fuses Greek and Egyptian culture. This culture, also influenced by Persian, Gnostic, and Kabbalistic beliefs, culminates in the Hermetic Tradition.

The Common Era

In the first century, Simon Magus becomes the final high-profile initiate of the Egyptian Thothian cult. He founds post-Christian Gnosticism, but religious mystics of the time find his doctrines heretical. Simon falls to his death trying to fly to impress Emperor Nero as a result of counter-magick from hostile mystics.

In the third century, Plotinus, a Roman mage, advances the theory of Neoplatonism, which later dramatically affects Hermetic praxis. The traditions of magick used by the Order derive from Pythagoras and Plato through Plotinus. Also in the third century, the *Corpus Hermeticum* is written. This document forms the basis for the Order of Hermes. The Order attributes the writings to Hermes Trismegistus (Thrice-Great Hermes). Zoroastrianism becomes part of the philosophy. Subject matter includes numbers, astrology, theology, spirits, nature, and early alchemical treatises.

By the fifth century, Hermetic magi have spread across Europe in an exodus from decaying Rome. The martyrdom of Hypatia happens in the early part of this century. She was a brilliant magus and mathematics genius. She lived in Alexandria and was an eloquent Neoplatonist. A mob of angry fanatics led by Cyril the Christian patriarch attacked her. She was stabbed to death and her library burned.

The seventh century sees the life of Merlinius, Celtic Archmage. A legend among Hermetics, he embodies the Hermetic magickal ideal. He vastly strengthens the magickal paradigm throughout Western Europe.

Factions and the Order of Hermes

The Order of Hermes has always drawn its might from the collection of Houses that comprise the Order. The current Houses of the Order of Hermes are:

Bonisagus. Specializing in magickal theory, Bonisagus mages are the scholars of the order and those who preserve and maintain the magickal secrets of Hermetic practice.

Ex Miscellanea. A political gestalt containing the lesser houses of Criamon, Jerbiton, and Merinita as well as several small cliques and individual practitioners.

Flambeau. The warriors of the Order.

Fortunae. Master numerologists and diviners.

Hong Lei. Composed of those Wu Lung who parted ways from the Akashayana due to recent events.

Ngoma. Practitioners of African high magick who sought protection within the Order of Hermes during the strife of the early 20th century. Relations with non-Hermetic Ngoma are tense as a result.

Quaesitor. Authors and protectors of the Code of Hermes, the Quaesitori manage the legal aspects of the Order's dealings.

Shaea. Specializing in linguistics and True Names, House Shaea traces their roots to ancient Egypt.

Skopos. This growing house pursues fundamental control over reality through a combination of quantum physics and Hermetic numerology.

Solificati. House Solificati trace their lineage back to the original Tradition who occupied the seat of Matter until Heylel Teomim Thoabath betrayed his companions during the March of the Nine (p. XX). The Solificati fractured in the aftermath, with some joining Ex Miscellanea while others formed the Children of Knowledge. In recent years, House Solificati have emerged as a Great House.

Tytalus. Masters of the will and Mind magick, House Tytalus seek exceptionalism within an Order of the exceptional. They strive to be the best of the best.

Verditius. Specializing in the creation, maintenance, and distribution of Wonders, House Verditius act as curators in peacetime and the Order's armory in times of conflict.

Xaos. Rising from the ashes of House Thig, this house seeks to modernize Hermetic magick through the lens of Discordianism. Despite their heated disagreements with several other Great Houses, their practice continues to grow.

Certain Future Fates and plot elements may alter the composition of the Great Houses. In particular, campaigns involving the Disparate Alliance may see houses Ngoma and Solificati either non-existent due to their members joining the Alliance, or still part of house Ex Miscellanea as embattled offshoots of their Disparate cousins.

Founding of the Houses

In the eighth century, Trianoma of Westphalia experiences her "precipice experience" atop Brienzer Rothorn in the Bernese Alps. She foresees the collapse of the Hermetic way and journeys across the lands of Europe, seeking a way to thwart this fate. She meets Bonisagus, and together they work to unite the magi of Europe and their praxes into a single doctrine. In 757 CE on Midwinter Night, twelve founding magi, including Trianoma and Bonisagus, adopt the Code of Hermes. Unfortunately, Tremere is among these magi. A scant few years later in 772 CE, Tremere and Bonisagus invent certámen to help resolve disputes.

Between 814-817 CE, the magus Pralix forms House Ex Miscellanea and the Order formally admits the House. In 848 CE Tremere attempts a coup of all Order Houses and nearly succeeds. The other Houses ignore this ominous sign, and Tremere merely faces Censure. In 876 CE, the Order inhabits the stronghold known as Doissetep. Founded in bygone times by an ancient sorcerer, the Hermetics annihilate the Nephandus residing there and claim it, after which they move it entirely to the Spanish Pyrenees north of Gerona.

Doissetep ascends as the exemplar of Hermetic virtue across the next several centuries. It stands as a shining example of scholarship, discipline, wisdom, influence, aplomb, and Ascension.

The Late Mythic Age

In the eleventh century, the Order suffers its first civil war, which lasts a decade. The war reaches its apex when Houses Flambeau and Tremere completely annihilate House Diedne. Some leaders escape, likely due to fae assistance. In 1022 CE Magi of House Tremere commit their infamous atrocity. They capture and magickally experiment on an ancient Tzimisce vampire. From these experiments they produce an alchemical potion. Tremere and seven of his closest fellow magi drink the potion and become vampires. The concoction destroys their Avatars, and they lose their Art. Tremere spends years perfecting a new form of vile blood magic to make up for this great loss. For more than a century, they hide their hideous transformation from the rest of the Order.

Also, in this century the Crusades begin. Some magi become caught up in this perversity and join the ranks of the crusaders, later returning with Arabic secrets of many occult subjects stolen from lands they helped violate.

Late in the twelfth century, Sleepers begin forming universities, signaling a return to learning in Europe. The Order spends the next few centuries nurturing and supporting this effort, which causes a heightening of academics within the Order. House Bonisagus founds the secret magickal university Fors Collegis Mercuris outside Genoa in 1190 CE.

The First Massassa War and The Pogrom

In 1199 CE, the Order uncovers Tremere's vampirism. A tribunal tries House Tremere *in abenstia*, delivering a verdict of Censure, Interdiction, and Requit. Warned by his allies, Tremere and his acolytes disappear into the night, sparking open conflict lasting for over a century and a cold war continuing to this day.

In the late 12th century, the Inquisition in Italy extends its mandate to include "wizards, witches, and all consorts of Satan and his demons." This sparks a centuries-long campaign that sees many minor Hermetic magi captured, tortured, and killed. In 1210 CE, a rebel group of mages from House Ex Miscellanea calling themselves "rationalists" attack Mistrbridge with a peasant army and cannons. The Chantry falls.

In 1325 CE on March 25th, a collection of disgruntled collectives of magi from across the world meet in the White Tower in Normandy. They found the Order of Reason and begin their campaign of "sanitizing" traditional magi. In 1330 CE, they begin a campaign to subvert control of European universities. The skirmishes between the Order of Reason and traditional magi escalate as the century wears on. Compounding issues, the Black Plague strikes in

1347 CE and kills a third of Europe's people. The Order's support structure is decimated, and the Sleepers believe haughty mages failed them.

In 1403 CE, Porthos Fitz-Empress is born, destined to one day become the supreme Tradition Archmage and Deacon Primus of Doissetep. In 1429 CE, Gilles de Rais, magus of House Ex Miscellanea, helps Joan of Arc ascend to leadership of the French army without permission from the Order. When Joan burns at the stake, Gilles turns Nephandic. His atrocities end with his execution in 1440 CE. Also in 1440 CE, the first Mistrbridge tribunal takes place in the ruins of the Mistrbridge Chantry. The tribunal decides to undertake a quest with the goal of uniting the Awakened across all lands against the common threat of the Order of Reason. In 1448 CE the Order of Reason destroys the earthly form of Doissetep in their first major victory. The second Mistrbridge tribunal takes place in the Forces realm aspect of Doissetep in 1449 CE. Attended by mages from across the world, the Craftmasons attack the tribunal, but they fail. This serves to unite the nascent groups, and they agree to build Horizon for a Grand Convocation of all Awakened. Fors College Mercuris relocated to Mus, hidden moon of Mercury.

The Grand Convocation

The meeting to create the traditions lasts nine years in the Umbral realm of Horizon, mostly due the difficulties of creating a united paradigm and codifying the Spheres. A team of Hermetics led by Masters Porthos and Baldric craft the model of Spheres used to this day. After fierce debate, a compromise emerges wherein each Tradition claims authority over one Sphere. In 1466 CE on the Summer Solstice, the gathering officially founds the Council, and the first group of mages drawn from all nine Traditions begins travelling the world. In 1470 CE, the March of the Nine ends in betrayal, and Heylel Teomim Thoabath *bani* Solificati undergoes destruction of body and Avatar as punishment. The Solificati disband, and remnants join House Ex Miscellanea.

The Dwindling

In 1482 CE, Council Master Paracelsus expands the spread and influence of universities, but the Order of Reason subverts them all. As a result, Doissetep blames the Council, and relations slowly sour across generations.

Between 1509-1535 CE, Johannes Faust boasts far and wide about his alchemical skills, even though he barely graduates into House Tytalus. He never gains much power so turns to Infernalism which he also fails at and dies badly. The Order of Reason spreads this story among the Sleepers, turning them even further against traditional magick.

Between 1527-1608 CE, Master John Dee *bani* Bonisagus foretells the British Empire and becomes advisor

Future Fates: Endings and Beginnings

The events listed under Endings and Beginnings presume the use of the default “official” metaplot as described in the M20 core book.

to Elizabeth I. Using this authority, he anchors time and space at Greenwich, creates new interest in mathematics, helps his friend Mercator establish a world standard map, and perhaps most importantly codifies Enochian, language of the Umbrood.

1645 CE marks an event recorded as “The Fall.” During the Battle of Naseby, Hermetic magi hired by Charles I are caught in the open and attempt vulgar magick in a desperate attempt to survive. Paradox consumes them all, resulting in the decimation of two houses. Paradox becomes an undeniable threat to Hermetic practice. From this point to the 1800s, many Hermetics retreat to sanctuaries safe from Paradox and try to solve this new problem.

Between 1770–1789 CE, Alessandro Cagliostro joins the Order and helps spark the French Revolution, as well as establishing Freemasonry.

Modern Revival

During the 1800s, Sleepers spark a renewed interest in occultism and make it fashionable among the elite. Order Magi, including Grand Master Max Theon and Paschal Beverly Randolph take advantage of this to inspire new interest in magick.

Between 1875–1947, Aleister Crowley, Hermetic mage, rises like a meteor and falls just as hard. In the end he becomes a Nephandus and disappears, his ultimate fate never verified.

In the 1890s, the Order of Reason becomes the Technocratic Union.

In 1922, the Ahl-i-Batin leave the Council due to its apathy regarding the effects of the Empire on the Middle East. Some of these mages join Ex Miscellanea.

In 1933, House Fortunae is founded.

Near the end of WWII, an alliance with the Technocracy results in a huge joint ritual led by Masters Callistro and Creon of the Order taking place near Berlin, which succeeds in banishing or destroying many Nephandi archmages. After the war ends, the Alliance also ends.

Between the 1950s and late 1980s, the Order subtly influences and encourages Sleepers to create many secret societies and pseudo-magickal cults. This, along with the rise of nuclear proliferation and a series of futile wars across the globe, helps expose the spiritual emptiness of

the Technocratic paradigm, and many Sleepers begin to question unsustainable progress.

In the 1960s, a movement to abolish the segregation between acolytes and mages in access to public buildings in Horizon begins, but some older mages, including from the Order, stubbornly resist. On Earth, the Ascension War intensifies as the Pogrom begins and the Order is active on the front lines.

In the 1970s, Master Malachai Ben-Yeshua *bani* Bonisagus disappears into the deep Umbra, seeking knowledge to traffic with spirits he believes control reality itself.

Endings and Beginnings

In the 1990s, the Ascension War reaches its zenith. The Ascension Warrior, possibly a reincarnation of Heylel Teomim, speaks before the Council of Nine.

In November 1997, the Archmages of Doisetep attack each other openly. The entire Horizon Realm burns, and Porthos sacrifices himself to contain the explosion. He succeeds, but the shockwave travels through every portal in the Chantry. Many Horizon Realms, including Doisetep, are utterly destroyed. The devastation disrupts the defenses of Horizon, and the Technocracy invades. Horizon falls. The Digital Web crashes, causing all users connected at that moment to suffer a chaos dump.

In 1999, the Avatar Storm begins. Some Children of Knowledge join the Order and found House Solificati.

The 2000s see the end of an era and the birth of a new one. In January 2000, Ishaq *bani* Quaesitor declares the Second Massassa War. The losses suffered are immense.

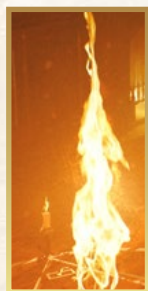
Between 2000–2010, Infernalism is revealed within House Jannissary, and the House is destroyed. House Skopos, dedicated to quantum reality, is founded. Members of Craft Ngoma join the Order and found House Ngoma. Kallisti of House Thig, decimated during the Second Massassa War, found House Xaos with the remnants. The New Horizon Council defeats Jodi Blake’s minions and reunite the Traditions.

In 2002, Ishaq ibn-Thoth adds the Eighth Tenet to the Code of Hermes, the first tenet added since its creation. The Tenet: I solemnly swear to vigorously and actively pursue the Enemies of Ascension and to unmake their works in this

world and all others. House Veriditius regains full house status, its ranks bolstered by those remnants of House Thig who did not join Xaos.

The future now belongs to the survivors. The ancient phoenix falls, but from the flames, a new phoenix rises. The young now find themselves moving the Order forward. The war for Ascension is far from over.

Current Events



A tidal wave of change has washed over the Order of Hermes, resulting in much loss. But not all the loss is mourned. With the fall of the old guard, so too have fallen many of the old ways. As any Hermetic will tell you, an Order mage does not manifest change. They *become* change. And change the Order must.

The *Code of Hermes* and *Peripheral Corrigenda* remain the bedrock of the Order, and an examination of its tenets is key in helping guide the magi of today's Order into tomorrow.

I swear everlasting loyalty to the Order and its members. The Order's enemies and friends are my enemies and friends, and I shall not spurn a friend nor succor an enemy.

The Order possesses a long-held reputation for its vicious political infighting, which bears responsibility for many of its catastrophes. Despite many who still believe initiates gain strength from learning and adapting to politics and favor-mongering, an attitude of cooperation currently flourishes within the Order. Younger members perfect their Art instead of wasting time on political intrigue. When the Houses work together, the Order becomes stronger, and that strength is necessary to reach Pymander.

I shall not through action or inaction endanger the Order, nor consort with devils or undead, nor anger the fae.

The second Massassa War devastated the Order and left too many Houses in ruins. Ever since House Tremere's betrayal, the Order swears to never rest until every last Tremere vampire is ash. Ostensibly this vow exists to right an ancient wrong and nothing more, but things are rarely so simple. The Second Massassa War was less about purging an evil and more about plundering Tremere Chantries for lore to help combat the Avatar Storm. The end result was little knowledge gained, many good mages lost, and House Tylalus corrupted by ghouled magi. The Order must walk a fine line of deciding how important the destruction of the Tremere is and how far to go to achieve it, to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

As the self-proclaimed maestros of summoning Umbrood, Infernal temptation has always been, and remains, a salient

danger to the Order. Throughout its history, mages of the Order have fallen to Infernalism and worse. Mages of the Order would be wise to make special effort to learn from prominent falls such as Faust and Crowley. Many of these Infernal entities have spent ages mastering guile, subterfuge, and cunning. Haughty mages assume corruption is easy to identify and avoid, and these attitudes allow the insidious infection of Infernalism to spread. The Order is infamous for its hubris. The fall of House Jannissary stands as a primary example of this.

I shall not deprive any Order mage of magickal power nor through action or inaction attempt to bring harm to an Order mage, except in justly declared and open certamen.

If the Order wishes to survive, let alone have any chance at winning the Ascension War, it must keep this tenet in mind. The lessons of Doissetep must be learned and learned well. For centuries, the Masters and Archmasters there schemed against each other, thwarted each other, and otherwise completely ignored this tenet until nothing remained between them except resentment and seething hatred. When things finally came to a head, the Conflagration tore the realm apart and devastated many other realms.

I shall not spy by any means or manners upon another Order mage's private works, nor read an Order mage's mind, nor invade or observe another Order mage's sanctum, save to guard against a clear, direct, forceful, and imminent threat to the safety of the Order.

Once upon a time, the Order of Hermes had their own secret police. As the sleeping world should have taught, this resulted in nothing good. The Order gave far too much power and far too little oversight to House Jannissary, and corruption inevitably followed. Abuses occurred, innocents suffered, and the House itself fell to Infernalism. The Order's magi must learn to trust and respect each other and to curb the excessive disregard of this tenet exercised by so many in the past.

If called before a Tribunal, I shall abide by its verdicts. If called to sit on a Tribunal, I shall vote wisely, respect the vote of others, and support the Tribunal's verdicts.

Since the founding of the Order, House Quaesitor stands as its legal bedrock. One of the few remaining Hermetic Archmagi, Ishaq ibn-Thoth, controls the House. Being an unflagging cornerstone of the Order and having as their



Primus an Archmagus, many Hermetics look to them as an example of how to move forward. Whether they can live up to these high ideals and expectations remains to be seen, as they have traditionally shunned the responsibilities of leadership to maintain the perception of neutrality as the judges of the Order.

Upon reaching the fifth degree or higher, I shall train apprentices and instruct them in this Code. I bear the entire responsibility for my apprentices and shall duly admonish, restrain, discipline, or arrest an apprentice who endangers the Order, and shall yield same apprentice to the Order's lawfully appointed agent or Tribunal.

Traditionally, neophytes of the Order must run a gauntlet of demanding and exhausting tasks. An initiate is expected to master several languages and memorize not only the Code of Hermes and Peripheral Corrigenda but also commit the infamous Hornbook to memory. Succeeding at all of this merely means being worthy to undergo a grueling, years-long apprenticeship under a mentor. At the end, the apprentice is set on a dangerous task, often to directly interfere with the Technocracy. If successful, they earn the right to challenge for recognition as a full magus. This challenge can, and often has, resulted in the death of the apprentice. Many apprentices become mere tools for political favor or are assigned frivolous tasks for which they are not prepared. The new generation of mentors often eschews these practices, believing the road forward need not include the Machiavellian intrigue of the

past. The rigorous training remains true, but new modern ways to teach both force and Forces are replacing the churn of apprentices experienced by the Order in the past.

I solemnly swear to pursue the Enemies of Ascension vigorously and actively and to unmake their works in this world and all others.

Rumors abound of the Technocracy changing from within and attempting to alter many of its previous methods and pogroms. Much like the Order itself, many of the old guard Technocrats are gone. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to change the minds of many Hermetics when it comes to deciding the Order's stance regarding the Technocracy. Ask most Hermetics their opinion and they'll respond, "In the end, it's either us or them." To alter the collision course of these two archnemeses requires a vast amount of effort and change. To the Order, the Ascension War only ends with the fall of the Technocracy.

I solemnly swear to uphold this sacred Code of Hermes and venture any risk or sacrifice to protect it. Should I breach it, may all mages of the Order rise as one united and hunt me down and destroy me forevermore.

Thus is the final tenet of the Code, and thus does every Hermetic passionately believe. Only by working together, not against each other, by embracing the change they claim to be, only by risking much can the Order succeed in reaching the City of Pymander and guiding the world to Ascension.

Notable Personalities

In this new dawn for the Order of Hermes, most of the old guard is gone, and fresh blood rises to face the challenges of the Order moving into the future. As such, it seems judicious to focus not on stodgy old wizards but instead to focus on those who lead the Order into a new era.

Master Iyeoka Sophia bani Shaea

Master Iyeoka stands as a luminous representation of the new face of the Order. Her quest for truth beyond appearances reflects the eternal search of Hermetic Masters regardless of the age. As a Master of a House dedicated to carefully recording and keeping secrets, Iyeoka knows many things she chooses to remain silent about until the time is right. Canny and astute, it's a safe bet she chooses wisely, especially considering one of her many secrets would reveal a certain (in)famous Archmaster and former Deacon Primus of Doissetep may not be entirely gone from this realm...

Nature: Prophet

Demeanor: Architect

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma (Regal) 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception (Astute) 5, Intelligence (Keen-Edged Mind) 4, Wits (Cunning) 4

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 4, Art 1, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Cosmology 3, Crafts 2, Empathy 2, Enigmas 4, Enochian (Binding Oaths) 4 (p. XX), Esoterica 3, Etiquette 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu (Practical Dueling) 4 (**Book of Secrets** p. 24), Law 2, Martial Arts 2, Meditation 3, Occult (Mystic Lore) 4, Politics 2, Science 1, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 1, Survival 2, Technology 1, Umbrood Protocols 3 (p. XX)

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Avatar 4, Chantry 5, Contacts 5, Influence 2, Library 4, Mentor 5, Node 4, Resources 4, Spies 4, Status 5

Willpower: 9

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 2 (Reinforced Clothing, **Mage 20**, p. 447)

Arete: 6

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 1, Forces 4, Life 3, Matter 2, Mind 3, Prime 3, Time 2, Spirit 4

Attacks/Powers: Iyeoka is a maestro of swordsmanship and deadly with blade in hand. She uses her Spheres to outmaneuver any opponent in melee. She forged her own twin blades. When forced to defend herself, she does not hesitate to unleash fire and lightning on her enemies. She also employs many spirit allies, and those who cross her may find themselves facing down a terrifying array of Umbrood. Martial Arts Maneuvers (**Mage 20**, pp. 423–426): Counter Throw, Deflecting Block, Soft Strike, Throw. Weapon Maneuvers (**Book of Secrets**, pp. 106–110): Bind, Feint, Fleche, Jab, Lightning Parry, Riposte, Slash.

Equipment: Wisdom (Main hand blade): Strength +4/L Temperance (Off hand blade): Strength +3/L. Iyeoka can attack with each blade once per turn at full dice pool but can only use Weapon Maneuvers with one of the attacks. Wisdom grants Iyeoka +2 bonus dice to Deflecting Block maneuvers, and Temperance grants her +2 dice to Riposte maneuvers. Each blade ignores 2 points of armor.

Image: Iyeoka appears to be in her early 30s. Her hair is a voluminous rich dark brown full of waves and curls. Her skin is a mellow deep brown with warm golden undertones. Her high cheekbones accent a narrow chin with elegant features and deep brown eyes flecked with an almost luminescent gold. She dresses in an archaic style, often wearing black leggings under a crimson high-necked swallow tailcoat with Enochian symbols stitched down the front in two vertical rows. The sleeves are white lace, and she wears knee-high black lace up boots. At all times she maintains perfect posture and carries herself with a quiet confidence.

Roleplaying Notes: You listen as much if not more than you speak. When you do speak, your use refined, articulate language. Your wit is as sharp as your humor is dry. You observe everything and miss little. Finding deeper truths and hidden meanings drives you. Your thirst for knowledge is boundless, but you also know others look to you for guidance in this new era for the Order. You take this responsibility seriously, and it weighs on you.

Focus: *Turning the Keys to Reality through High Ritual Magick with a splash of Martial Arts.* Her instruments include books, dance and movement, energy, formulas, languages, meditation, symbols, weapons, writing and inscriptions.

Kallisti, “High Priestess” of House Xaos

Until the Second Massasa War, House Thig stood as the Order's technomantic House. They allied closely with House Janissary and went all in on the Second Massasa War, which resulted in the near destruction of the House. The new Primus Sharad Osei convinced House Veriditius to let the remnants of Thig merge with them. Not all members of Thig agreed with this choice, however, including Osei's star pupil Virginia Chapel bani Thig. She gathered all the remaining Thig mages who refused to join Veriditius and formed House Xaos within Ex Miscellanea. Discarding her old Craft Name, she announced she was “reborn through Eris's kiss” and took the name Kallisti.

It's rumored Kallisti's Avatar directly possesses her from time to time. If true, this blurring of the line between body and spirit would mean she may be closer to Ascension than any known living mage. With an undeniably enigmatic and confounding aura, it seems as if even she may not fully understand her own self. She exists as a potent force in both her house and the Order as a whole.

Nature: Heretic

Demeanor: Trickster

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma (Bold) 5, Manipulation (True Believer) 4, Appearance (Captivating) 4, Perception (Intuitive) 4, Intelligence 3, Wits (Fox-Witted) 4

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 1, Art 1, Athletics 1, Awareness (Mystic Instincts) 4, Computer 3, Cosmology 3, Crafts 2, Empathy 1, Enigmas (Codes and Ciphers) 4, Enochian 3 (p. XX), Esoterica 2, Expression (Motivational Speaking) 4, Firearms 1, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Meditation 3, Melee 2, Occult 3, Politics 2, Science 3, Streetwise 3, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 2, Technology 3, Umbrood Protocols 2 (p. XX)

Backgrounds: Avatar 5, Allies 3, Chantry 4, Contacts 4, Library 4, Node 4, Resources 3, Status 4

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 5

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 4, Forces 2, Life 3, Mind 4, Prime 2, Time 2, Spirit 3

Attacks/Powers: If backed into a corner, Kallisti sends entropy into the environment around her foes and messes with their heads to create confusion, hallucinations, and chaos. If able to engage an enemy on her terms, she uses her skills with tech to wield information as a weapon to destroy both the plans and reputation of the unfortunate targets, as well as introducing chaos into their lives in as many ways as she can imagine.

Equipment: She keeps a handy variety of lesser talismans on her person in the form of jewelry and always keeps a knife or three handy.

Image: Kallisti appears to be in her mid to late 20s but is at least in her 40s by now, if not older. Her features are alluring with wavy long black hair and a dusky olive complexion, likely of Mediterranean origin. She wears an excessive number of rings, necklaces, bracelets, bangles, and the like. Her clothing tastes change with her mood from day to day and sometimes moment to moment. She has a large 23 inside a pentacle minus the circle tattooed on her left shoulder, and a golden apple with "Kallisti" written on it in classical Greek on the small of her back.

Roleplaying Notes: You're fairly sure you are what you claim to be. *Fairly* sure. Thinking about it too much just makes it more confusing. Best not to dwell. Being *exceptionally* good at convincing people of things, maybe you've simply convinced yourself so well it's true now. Either way, doesn't matter. Some days you're Kallisti, 23rd chosen High Priestess of Eris, and some days you're Eris.

Focus: *Everything is Chaos* which Kallisti guides and rides through *High Ritual Magick* combined with *Reality Hacking*. Her common instruments include circles and designs, computer gear, cups and vessels, devices and machines, energy, languages, mass media, numbers and numerology, symbols, thought-forms, tricks and illusions, true names, writings, inscriptions, and runes, body modification, and internet activity.

Master Zagadka Vandamal *bani* Criamon

Zagadka is a puzzle wrapped in an enigma, the norm for members of their House. If asked about their past, Zagadka spins a new tale each time. Every interaction with Zagadka is more than it seems, full of hidden meaning and riddles, Zagadka weaves into their actions and words to help guide the person with whom they are interacting. They are an expert diviner and reader of auras. Any new enigma they find consumes and delights them.

Nature: Trickster

Demeanor: Visionary

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation (Guile) 5, Appearance 3, Perception (Intuitive) 5, Intelligence (Bright) 4, Wits (Fox-Witted) 6

Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness (Instincts) 5, Art 3, Athletics 1, Awareness (Auras) 4, Computer 2, Cosmology (Omens) 4, Crafts (Design) 4, Drive 1, Empathy 4, Enigmas 5, Enochian 4 (p. XX), Esoterica 3, Expression (Shut-Downs) 4, Investigation 3, Law 2, Medicine 2, Meditation 2, Occult (Chaos Magic) 4, Politics 2, Science 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 5, Survival 1, Technology 1, Umbrood Protocols 3 (p. XX)

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Contacts 2, Dream 3, Resources 2, Status 3

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 6

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Entropy 1, Forces 2, Life 4, Matter 1, Mind 3, Prime 2, Time 4, Spirit 3

Attacks/Powers: Zagadka prefers not to fight but if forced, they utilize Time, Correspondence, and Mind to befuddle their foes so much they easily can overpower them or escape. They are not afraid to risk Paradox to restart confrontations until they get an outcome they like. They have experienced many Quiets as a result of this.

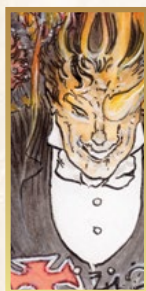
Equipment: Zagadka always seems to have exactly what they need on hand for any given situation but never carries anything in particular.

Image: Zagadka is gender-fluid and presents differently on different days. In fact, their entire appearance presents differently on different days. All physical features of Zagadka are variable except their unique eyes. Their eyes are always a deep rich violet with an outer silver ring and a mischievous twinkle. As for dress, their outfits *seem* random but never are. They always have some hidden meaning for the onlooker to discern.

Roleplaying Notes: You live for riddles. Whether it's solving them, creating them, or sharing them, enigmas and puzzles are your Truth. Your words and actions always have double or triple meanings. You don't talk like a certain comic book villain, but your words always carry hidden messages. You love to laugh and make others laugh.

Focus: They believe *All the World's a Stage* and they take full advantage of this through *Bardism*. Their favored instruments are artwork, dances and movement, eye contact, fashion, music, tricks and illusions, voice and vocalizations.

Paradigm



As mentioned previously, a Hermetic mage does not manifest change—they *become* change—and their paradigm reflects this belief. Using arcane ritual and enigmatic formulae which they master with years of study and practice, a Hermetic commands the fundamental forces of the universe to bend to their will.

The M20 core book details core paradigms and practices used by the order and **Book of Secrets** details how focus works step by step in Chapter Three.

The Order commonly utilizes the expanded paradigms (**Book of Secrets**, pp. 198–203) *Ancient Wisdom is the Key*, *Transcend your Limits*, and *We are All God(s) in Disguise* as well as the expanded practices *Elementalism* and *God-Bonding*.

The below details how an Order mage might approach each Sphere of magick, along with a look at some unique facets of Hermetic practice including Hermetic Naming and two secondary knowledges Hermetics use as foci to aid in their workings.

Common Instruments

Hermetic mages typically use the following instruments:

- **Ars Conlignationis (Correspondence):** Geometric patterns, shewstones, Enochian characters, illustrations of the Sephirot, doorways or passages, sheathing a weapon or otherwise inserting one object into another, invocations of Raziel.
- **Ars Fortunae (Entropy):** Numerology, caustic substances, sigils or numbers set into rigidly ordered patterns or deliberate chaos, rust or other physical evidence of degradation or decay.
- **Ars Virium (Forces):** Swords or daggers, iron, fire, smoke, magnets, pentacles, invocations of Gabriel or Michael, light.
- **Ars Vitae (Life):** Ankh, incense, chalice or cup, pure water, staff or wand of green wood, pentacles, invocations of Emmanuel or Raphael.
- **Ars Materiae (Matter):** Unfinished earthly materials (ores, clays, or gemstones, for example), hammer or chisel, metallic rod.
- **Ars Mentis (Mind):** Unbroken circles (often rings or crowns), the Hebrew characters for Kether, swords or other edged thrusting weapons, the use of True Names, mirrors.

- **Ars Potentiae (Prime):** Sweetest honey or nectar, alchemically purified gold, the Tetragrammaton, brilliant sunlight.
- **Ars Spirituum (Spirit):** Enochian glyphs, Names of angels or other astral beings, Seal of Solomon, smoke or mist, black mirrors, circles of binding or warding.
- **Ars Temporis (Time):** Star charts, astrolabe, sand or dust, heirlooms or other aged objects, scrying pool, trance states, diamond.



Additional Secondary Abilities

These Knowledges are integral to the practices of the Order of Hermes.

Enochian

Enochian represents the Hermetic's understanding of the tongue of the Umbrood entities frequently encountered by Order mages. More than words, it also demonstrates the mage's understanding of the mystic and psychological implications of sounds used to interact with these Umbrood. Unless the Storyteller decides otherwise, the mage can't use more dots of any social Talent than they have dots in

Enochian when interacting with Umbrood, and dots in Enochian cannot exceed the mage's Arete.

- Student: Very basic phrases and some words of power.
- College: Express basic thoughts and ideas.
- Masters: Basic understanding of the mystical and psychological implications of the tongue.
- Doctorate: Fluent in the tongue.
- Scholar: Able to speak like an Umbrood native.

Specialties: Bargains, Binding Oaths, Commands, Guile



An Example of Hermetic Naming

Birth Name: Sarah Katherine Miller

Craft Name: Rhys Ever Hargrave, *bani* Xaos

Shadow Name: Gabriel Sarah Katherine Ever Miller Hargrave, *bani* Xaos, Blackbird the Cailleach, Dirge of the Winter Court, Protector of the Vega, Trickster Extraordinaire

True Name: Gabriel Sarah Katherine Ever Miller Hargrave, *bani* Xaos, Blackbird the Cailleach, Dirge of the Winter Court, Protector of the Vega, Trickster Extraordinaire; In Caligine Abditus, Larmo Giltrep Vestruvooom Neelet Lur

Umbrood Protocols

This Knowledge represents the Order's aloof approach to summoning. Unlike etiquette, this measures the mage's understanding of rote formulas used in a standardized format to forge pacts with Umbrood entities.

- Student: Enough knowledge to get in trouble making deals.
- • College: Able to forge pacts with minor entities.
- • • Masters: Comfortable dealing with greater Umbrood.
- • • • Doctorate: Able to make effective pacts with powerful entities.
- • • • • Scholar: Able to work favorable deals with all but the most esoteric and bizarre Umbrood.

Specialties: Comprehending Concepts, Elementals, Forging Pacts, Reading Intent

The Naming of a Hermetic Mage

Order mages take their names very seriously. An Order mage employs a Craft or Shadow name (used when interacting with the world) and a True name (known only by the mage and their mentor). Craft and Shadow names serve two purposes. First, it allows the mage to define their own nature instead of being defined by someone else who chose their previous name for them. Second, it protects the mage from their enemies, as well as protecting those in their Sleeper life.

The Craft Name is the mage's chosen name for themselves, normally passable as a regular name. They tend to be graceful and distinguished, rarely using common convention.

The Shadow Name is the mage's Craft Name, with the mage's given name inserted between the first and middle

or last names of the Craft Name, succeeded by a list of their accomplishments in enigmatic fashion. The number of honorifics attached to their Shadow Name often reveals the level of hubris of the mage.

The True Name defines the core of the mage. It uses the entirety of the Shadow Name, followed by the words "In Caligine Abditus" (or "In Darkness Hidden") and 10 syllables (which are not real words). The True Name is the aggregate of the mage's Awakened being. It reveals the entirety of the mage's essence.

If any other mage knows the Hermetic's True Name, that mage can target the Hermetic with magickal Effects at a -2 Difficulty or apply a similar modifier to rolls to counter the Hermetic's magics. Additionally, the Hermetic is treated as "body sample" for Correspondence range at all times.

The payoff for the Order mage shows itself when the mage becomes the target of long-ranged magicks by a mage who does not know the Hermetic's True Name. Without it, the Order mage is treated as "no connection" on the Correspondence table regardless of actual distance. Secondly, the Hermetic subtracts their Arete rating from successes rolled by the attacking mage to pierce the Hermetic's wards.

Most Hermetics defend their True Names in their own minds with elaborate tricks and traps for any would-be invader. To even attempt to pry it from the mind of the Hermetic requires both an understanding and acceptance of the power of True Names, and Mind 4, along with successes equal to the Hermetic's Arete as a base threshold before any of the aforementioned tricks and traps.

Hermetic Wonders

The Order's libraries overflow with tales of wonders, legendary to uncelebrated. From pendants commonly used by apprentices to blades forged by Merlin, the Order's history does not lack for magnificent Wonders. Below are new wonders of value to modern Hermetics.

•• Game of Senet

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background cost 2 pts.

In Egypt, board games were a favorite indulgence, and Senet was one of the most popular. This game is played on carved and inlaid boards and consists of two players. Turns are determined by using throw sticks or knucklebones and the goal is to have all the player's pieces "escape" the board before the other player. In Ancient Egypt, the winner was considered blessed with good fortune. These particular senet boards come with the board, the playing pieces, the knucklebone "die," and throwing sticks. They come to the Order from House Shaea, and if two Awakened mages play Senet with these specific game sets, they find themselves blessed with good fortune.

System: In order to activate the effect, two Awakened mages must play a full game of Senet. During the game, both players roll Arete at Difficulty 6. If either player has dots in a gaming or strategy Ability, the Storyteller may allow the player to reduce the Difficulty of the roll by one per dot in the Ability to a minimum of Difficulty 3. The mage with the highest successes receives a ½2 Difficulty modifier to all Talent and Skill rolls until the next dawn. Each playthrough takes 30 minutes and requires a safe and relaxed place to play. A mage can only benefit from this bonus once and must wait until the next dawn to gain the bonus again. A mage may not "forfeit" to allow another mage to win; the players must complete a full game each time.

••• Imphepho Wierook

Arete N/A, Quintessence 15, Background Cost 3 pts.

Imphepho Wierook is a ritually prepared incense used by Muti of South Africa. When lit, it emits a thick fragrant smoke which smells of camphor and fenugreek. A single bundle of this herb prepared ritually by an Awakened mage allows for several uses before burning up. Each hour burned consumes one point of the Imphepho's Quintessence. Once all points are exhausted, no incense remains. Introduced to the Order by Sangomas of House Ngoma and used by both the House and members of the Craft, Imphepho possesses a variety of ritual uses including protection against evil entities and negative energy, divination, summoning, and communing with spirits.

System: When used as part of an attempt to summon or commune with Umbrood, burning the incense creates three effects. First, it lowers the gauntlet rating of the area the summoning takes place in by one rank; second, it allows everyone present to be able to see the spirits involved in the ritual within the smoke; and third, it grants the main caster ½2 Difficulty to all dice rolls used to interact with the Umbrood for the duration of the ritual.

When used as part of an attempt to protect against hostile Umbrood, burning the incense wards an area up to 500 square feet, forcing hostile spirits to add +2 to the Difficulty of any rolls made to use Charms or sphere magick as well as removing 1 die from all Rage damage pools available to the Umbrood.

•••• Waidan Ding

Arete N/A, Quintessence 10, Background Cost 5 pts.

Traditionally, a ding is a three-legged alchemical cauldron used in the practice of Taoist ritual magic. Used for Waidan, or "outer alchemy," these cauldrons, normally created by mages of House Hong Lei or created by Wu Lung mages, assist in achieving both the exoteric purpose of Taoist sorcery, achieving harmony, and the esoteric purpose, achieving control. These cauldrons can be used as a tool for any Waidan-based practice by the mage in addition to the use below.

System: The Cauldron begins with 10 points of Quintessence, and once consumed, the mage must recharge the ding with more Quintessence. Each use of the cauldron consumes one point of Quintessence. The cauldron activates by placing quicksilver inside of it and heating it with a coal-based fire for one hour. During this time, the cauldron supplies the mage with both harmony and control. The mage must meditate in front of the cauldron for the entire hour. At the end of the hour, the mage rolls Arete Difficulty 5 and regains spent Willpower equal to successes tallied on the Arete roll, up to their normal maximum. If already full, the mage gains one point of temporary Willpower above their normal maximum useable as normal. If the mage fails the roll, they gain no Willpower, but the cauldron uses no Quintessence. If the roll is botched, the mage gains no Willpower, and the cauldron spends one Quintessence as normal.

Unlikely Allies

The Order of Hermes does not have a stellar record when it comes to cooperation. Partly due to unwise choices made in their past and partly due to changing slowly, the Order has much work ahead to repair relations and make reparations for its troubled past.

The Disparate Alliance

One of the earliest recorded illustrations of the Order's failure at cooperation transpired during the Convocation to form the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions in the 1400s. The Order refused to allow the Ngoma or Wu Lung into their ranks, thinking there was no gain from allowing "savages and primitives" into their fledgling alliance. Later, the Order profited greatly from colonialism, causing problems with the Dreamspeakers and Verbenae. The Order thought the path to winning Ascension was to influence the nobility and elite to embrace occultism during the Victorian age, but in the end, they only managed to strengthen the Technocracy.

When Hermetic Masters began to seclude themselves from Earth as the Technocracy strengthened their grip on reality, those same Masters encouraged the Order's emissary to Horizon to be openly discourteous and disrespectful to the Ahl-i-Batin and the Verbenae, marginalizing the Order's influence on Council politics.

In WWII, the Order supported the Axis at first, thinking the mystical influence on its members was a way to fight back against Technocratic influence. It would be late in the war when they realized their folly and joined the Allies, even working with the Technocracy long enough to unseat the Nephandi from their power base.

The Order later admitted the Long Hei and the Ngoma into their ranks, but even these overtures have reeking undertones of white savior complex, as well as an easy way to shore up membership. It should be unsurprising to discover the motivations behind these admittances are met with scrutiny and sideways glances.

Perhaps thankfully, much of the old guard is gone. In the wake of the Conflagration, those who remain have the chance to steer the Order away from repeating past mistakes. Even though many of the perpetrators are gone, the things they did should not be ignored. The Order must learn from these mistakes so as not to repeat them in the future and must endeavor to rectify and undo what they can for those unduly affected by those past choices.

The Ngoma Craft mages don't begrudge their wayward kin in the Order, but no love is lost for the Order as a whole. Ngoma Craft mages see the Order as usurping their craft while

trying to be white saviors. If the Order as a whole accepts House Ngoma as equal in all ways to any other House, and works to learn from House Ngoma, it may be possible to bridge the gap between themselves and the Craft. As allies, the ritual magick possible together could shake the world.

As for Hong Lei, the same level of acceptance and willingness to make up for past failures must occur to strengthen these internal Order ties. Once accomplished, much work remains to strengthen ties between the Wu Lung and the Hong Lei. Should they accomplish this, again as with the Ngoma Craft, the ritual magick possible together would be astounding.

When it comes to the Solificati Craft, things become even more difficult. Those within Craft Solificati generally consider the members of House Solificati weak-willed at best, and actively traitorous at worst. When things became tough, so say those of Craft Solificati, those of House Solificati ran and hid. If there was any path forward, it would most likely be through House Shaea and House Hong Lei, finding common ground with their passion for Alchemy.

Stories involving cooperation between Ngoma Craft mages and House Ngoma could include banding together to combat Technocratic operations in the African continent, especially strip mining and destroying natural resources to fuel technology. House Fortunae could spearhead an effort to force economic change, battling the Syndicate directly in one of its most lucrative territories. As the combat arm of the Traditions, the Order could lend aid to Craft Ngoma with fighting back against violent evildoers. Much ancient magickal knowledge exists in Africa. Entire chronicles could revolve around seeking for and unearthing such knowledge, with the aid of Craft Ngoma.

Stories involving cooperation between the Order and the Wu Lung could involve combating organized crime in China, along with battling hate, not only between Asia and the rest of the world, but also within Asia itself. Ancient Taoist magick secrets remain hidden in remote places, and the Technocracy undoubtedly damaged or destroyed many sacred places and ancient wards. Who knows what kinds of terrifying Incarna held back by ancient wards may now become free?

The Technocracy

When the Technocracy is present, most Order mages shoot first and talk never. This attitude, and the violent history between the Technocracy and the Order spawning it, makes any lasting peace absurdly difficult. But that does

Future Fates: Hermetic and Technocratic story hooks

The story ideas below assume the default “official” metaplot as described in **Mage 20**. The Storyteller can modify the ideas presented here to fit the Future Fates being used in their chronicle.

Regardless of what events transpired at the turn of the century and the early years of the new century, the Technocracy would work diligently to undo any deviant Hermetic workings they had control of, allowing for most of the below events to take place in any Future Fate that includes both the Traditions and the Technocracy coexisting.

not mean it is utterly impossible. In the wake of the Avatar Storm and other catastrophic events of the turn of the century, things long buried begin to rear their ugly heads.

In the days when the Technocracy was ascendant and capturing Hermetic locations left and right, they spared no expense to undo Hermetic workings and cleanse the deviant magic from the world. Perhaps one of these undone workings was keeping a terrifying Incarna or Outer Void horror bound or barricaded from Earth.

The NWO now realizes the destruction of Hermetic works during the Pogrom leaves them in a dire spot and a temporary alliance is necessary as the Technocracy does not have the required tools to handle this themselves. The Order may seem to have the upper hand to dictate terms, but how much petty bickering is the Order willing to pursue when such a dangerous threat once again begins an incursion into our realm?

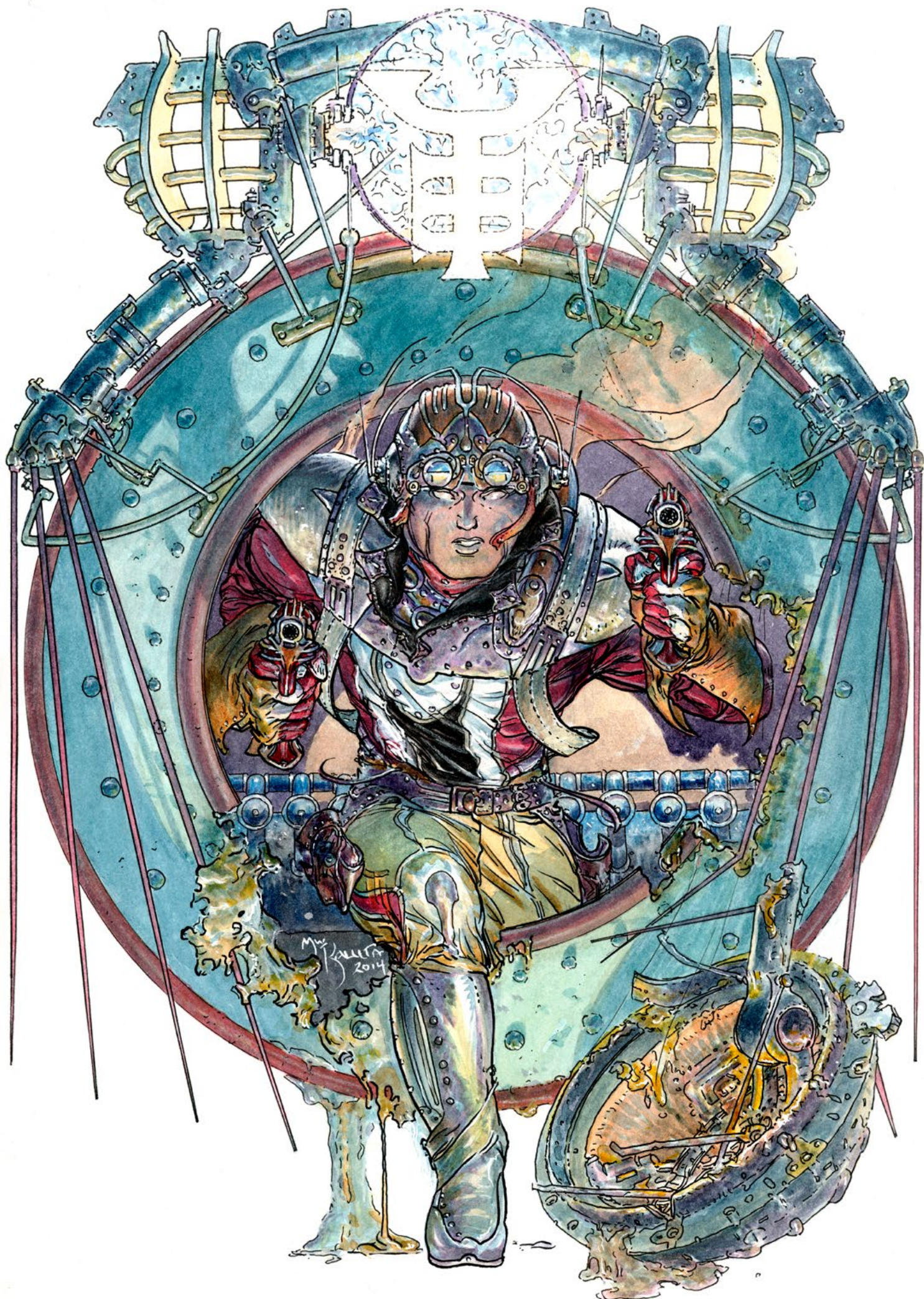
The events of the turn of the century cost many Awakened lives on both sides. Perhaps the Order and the NWO agree to a prisoner exchange as a result. This could lead to a larger repatriation event between the Council and Technocracy as a whole, leading to the recovery of key lost

Chantries or Umbral Realms for the Order.

In 1190, the Order founded Fors Collegis Mercuris as a secret school for mages in Italy. In 1450, due to assaults by the Order of Reason, the Order transported the college to Mus, the invisible moon of Mercury. In the 1500s, the Ahl-i-Batin established the City of Brass on the surface of Mercury. For over three centuries this dominion lasted, until 1847 when the residents of the City of Brass uncovered enemy infiltration and evacuated. Some made it to the college on the moon, but not many. A few months later, the rotation of the planet returned to normal, and the city burned. In 1995, the Technocracy and Nephandi both attacked the College, and the survivors fled. The Nephandi exerted control and have held it ever since.

A temporary truce between the Council (specifically the Order in its traditional role as soldiers of the Council), the Disparate Alliance (specifically the Ahl-i-Batin), and the Technocracy (specifically the Void Engineers) could occur for the purpose of planning and executing an assault to take back Mus. Regardless of cross-faction bickering, everyone can agree 25 plus years of uninterrupted Nephandic access is a Very Bad Thing...





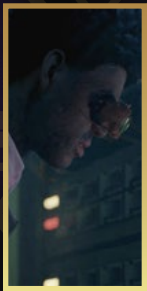
Sons of Ether

(The Society of Ether)

"Where do correct ideas come from? Correct ideas do not come from a vacuum. They come from, you know, experiments but also interactions with incorrect ideas. So with the interaction between correct ideas and incorrect ideas a higher truth emerges."

— Dr. Michio Kaku, Dallas Observer, December 17, 2019

All, or None: Toward a Reconstitution of Wonder



The Society of Ether are the Scientists of the magickal world. They're the expansionists of humanity's paradigmatic resistance against hopeless divorce from Enlightenment. These wonder-makers came to the Traditions in revolution against, and from within, the Order of Reason, which thrust itself upon all of reality as the coercively dogmatic Technocratic Union. They brought with them both the potency of scientific reason and an impassioned assemblage of *reasons* to fight *brilliantly* the reductive force of their former allies. Highly individualistic in pursuit and paradigm, they make up jointly the academic arm and basemented research-and-development divisions of the Council.

Dynamic Science, their term for magick, is the discipline of ordered observation, interpretation, and the application of Will toward change; or, in short, the science of defiance against that which Consensus deems *impossible*. Done right, and approached rigorously in good-faith, Science runs on — and produces — *wonder*. In an era *lacking* in this essentiality, deprived of it through the *intentionality* of the Technocracy's corrupted and control-oriented machinations over Consensus, the Society of Ether has never been *needed* more intimately.

If ever there's been a time that humanity needed magick, or that magick needed Science, it's now, in the 21st century. Irrefutably, we find ourselves locked in an era which cries out for inspired wonder to force back the bounds of stagnation, and worse. The Etherites are less in the business of commanding the response to these cries, as providing the vectors of inquiry essential to hospitably greeting them, such that from disparate workings might stream a churning *sea* of wonder. They're the proverbial barrelmen, captains, privateers, and navigators of that wondrous sea. Preferencing themselves upon a world of uncharted expanse, the Society has set about chartering for humanity a way *forward* through the long-clenched strangle-hold of the Technocratic Union.

Diversely and inclusively assembled, they're superseded theorists, researchers, anachronistic inventors, eccentric intellectuals, fringe thinkers, deviant physicists, and death-ray innovators of every sort. From within each discipline of thought, they know poetry in scrawled equational expression and symphonious utterances in brazen misadventure. Etherites carry the initiated spark of polymathic genius, and wonder, armed as they're with the ancient knowledge of endless Ether. They explore the depths and breadth of wonder across a manifold of chaotically ordered and intersecting vortices of change. The

children of Ether's breath is intentioned not upon, but *with*, the "all" of humanity: Awakened, asleep, and all of those clever spaces between.

This World of Darkness calls for a light, and these stewards of the luminiferous have answered as a Sophoclean chorus, all too aware of their prior role in the tragedy unfolded upon humanity, and equally willing to *be the change* which resolves itself throughout reality. Etherites are dedicated to the polycentric advancement of the collective and learned push-

back against the confining barriers of the forcibly unknown, of the enticing "unknowables," and of any and all restriction of the inquiring Will to wonder, with divine curiosity, at the fathoms of reality. That which is called *impossible* is just an inviting wall to climb or bore through, dig under, or otherwise discover and innovate of and from ourselves a shared way *onward*. Those who would be themselves impediments to this cultivation of wonder, of inquiry and ingenuity, are so named the enemies of the wondrous breath of expansive Ether.

History



Often considered one of the "young Traditions" within the Council, Etherites are quick to add a footnote to this. While it's true that they left the Technocratic Union in the first years of the 20th century, rebranding from the Electrodyne Engineers, the nascent Society of Ether's origins date back many centuries further. Popularly stereotyped as mad-scientists and rogue technomancers, steampunks and pulp-inspired eccentrics, their individualistic chic and style is built around a core ethos from an ancient source: *The Book of Ether*. Legends suggest the book was authored in the 13th century BCE, in the era of the Trojan War, by pre-Socratic philosopher-mystic Aretus, derived from Atlantean mysteries, and later translated into Greek by Aristotle. Whether or not the fabled authorship is true is held as largely irrelevant, and it was many centuries later that the text was rediscovered.

Medieval Origins

Lorenzo Golo, Italian Hermeticist of House Verditus, discovered an Arabic translation in 1171 CE, titled *Kitab al-Alacir*. Shortly after, he founded House Golo, eventually leaving the Hermetics to dedicate himself to the book. In 1188, Simon de Laurent, a Gabrielite of the Knights Templar engaging in the supremacist atrocities of eugenic slaughter and pillaging that were the "Holy" Crusades, plundered Aristotle's original translation of the same text from a desecrated mosque. The paths of these European men crossed, and they engaged in discussion of the grimoires each was studying. Realizing they were both describing the same work, translations diverted by centuries, they created a new comprehensive distillation. Soon after, they founded the Natural Philosophers Guild.

This Guild stands as spiritual predecessor to the Society of Ether and is to whom this "young" Tradition owes its foundations. They explored complex metaphysical cosmogonic insights within the grimoire. Delving into its

philosophically paradoxical dialogs, they studied material composition of reality and concerns of global Ascension. Readers found it initiatory, Awakening to revelations that "everything is real, but not everything is true." The grimoire outlined the substantive space between all things, in which all energy and matter in all universes is suspended, through which moves all "being." This invisible substance envelopes the polycentric dynamic of "all," defining the edged barriers, as the Walls of Troy which contain the heroic agent of observation, between that which a thing is, from that which it is *not*.

Following Catholic excommunication, they were isolated, and cash poor. Dissolving into various guilds across the arts and sciences, their influences *ignited* the European Renaissance. By 1325, these were subsumed within the varied Conventions of the Order of Reason, who strode through centuries with global corruption, colonialism, economic manipulations, trade, enslavement, human trafficking, and genocides.

Modernity, Industry, and Expansion

In the 18th century, the historical basis for the novel *Frankenstein* took place. An Austrian Etherite studying conjunctions of Life and Matter, and restoration of the dead, created life. Inspiring Shelley's 1818 publication, he's rumored to have Awakened a reanimated construct. For centuries, many claimed encounters, even studies, with this virtuous "created Scientist," in polar northern reaches.

While the Society's history is written predominantly by European aristocracy, unique currents of Etherites arose within the Conventions of the globalized Technocratic Union. For example, a group near Gonaïves, whose engagements gained the attention of the Union during 1804's Haitian Revolution. Napoleonic loyalists claimed that these revolutionaries had stolen a copy of their grimoire, while those more culturally aware recognized that they were

practicing a Science derived from Yoruban *Oḍu Ifá*. This makes sense, when recognizing—outside of Eurocentric bias—that significant legacies from Yorubaland are represented in Haiti. Ogun, amongst Yoruba traditionalists, is the *òrisha* whose *aṣẹ*, or life force, personifies pioneering creation; the Will of blacksmiths, railroads, engines, automobiles, nautical disciplines, and all material innovation and Science. This legacy is reflected amongst the devotees of the *Lwa* of Haitian religion, who exclaim “*Awoshe, Nago!*”, in praise of these Yoruban-descended spirits who as mounted cavalry, medics, navies, and native Taino warriors raise their fists in collective, defiant strength against oppressors and enemies of freedom.

Ether Science emerged again within the Order of Reason, with distinct focus and identity, in 1805. Taking the name of the Voltarian Order, following the energy studies of Napoleon’s favored Scientist, Alessandro Volta, their intellectual curiosity for wonder again imprinted itself globally. They arose as technomancers, with structure and naming conventions modeled from the elite universities so many Awakened within.

In the middle of the 19th century, amidst the restructuring of the Order of Reason into the Technocratic Union, the Voltarians reorganized as the eclectic Electrodyne Engineers. Specialized around studies of energy, they found focus in light wave theories of *luminiferous ether*. Dedicating themselves to a scientific progress for all of humanity, this Convention of the Union found themselves well-placed throughout the world’s institutions and universities, even taking to the publishing world in 1872 with *Popular Science Monthly*.

A royal charter to “exploit the phenomena of the Luminiferous Ether and Celestial Phlogiston for aerial exploration and to investigate the uncharted altitudes of the heavens” led to the organization which would become The Royal Ethernautical Society. These Ethernauts went on to contribute a classified moon landing in 1892, alongside many prominent advancements (such as Victoria Station, on a lunar asteroid orbit in penumbral Etherspace). Their explorations (and tech!) led to the development of Horizon Realms such as Gernsback Continuum.

By the 20th century, the Engineers found themselves in pinnacle levels of funded research and development, including at the US Secret Service’s clandestine Area 38. Established to investigate anomalous reality deviations, the installation was staffed by Electrodyne Scientists. They made efforts to reverse-engineer, and improve, the tech of their Union allies and the Disparates. Failing profoundly to produce *reproducible* results, instead they left dozens of projects hanging in the liminal space between magnificence and mayhem.

An experiment from 1887, repeated in 1905, “failed to prove” (within Consensus) the theories of *luminiferous ether*. Technocratic leadership popularized these findings, to shift humanity away from reality deviance, and dubbed all Ether “debunked pseudoscience.” This did not sit well with the Engineers, whose identity and Science were closely tied to Ether, to which they believed all of humanity deserved access. Besides, they reasoned: A thing is only “pseudoscience” if the conductors of Consensus decide it!

War and Tradition

That year, having grown disillusioned with Technocracy, the Engineers opted to leave. They felt that the Union had been stolen by fascists, dogmatists, and sadistic bureaucrats, who’d betrayed the dream of an expansive Scientific Utopia for all. The Union’s domination was more about “means” than any Utopian “end” and perhaps had furthered the whole of humanity closer to a dark end indeed. Reorganizing as the Sons of Ether, named for an internal secret society of wealthy white men from Oxford University, they left the Conventions and joined the Council. Soon after, they began publishing their Science journal, *Paradigma*.

The Union deemed the Etherite control of Area 38 “too dangerous to Consensus” and utilized political influence to shutter the facility, relocating its funding and projects to their own (Convention-controlled) sites. Area 38 was destroyed by US Army special forces employing Clockwork Convention HydroGear hardware, its personnel executed, and subsequently bombed into a forgotten column on some accountant’s ledgers. As with many conspiracies, records and caches of bizarre equipment and experimental holdings found their way into hungry unAwakened hands, eager for the opportunity to paw under the greasy hood of eternity.

Etherites entered the competitive automotive industry bubble, opposing the Conventions. Seizing a chance to *innovate* against the Union, Scientists like Dr. Leland gave humanity *dreams*, again. There was a fleeting golden age of automobiles: True wonder awakened upon city streets. The dream was swallowed by the crushing weight of economic inevitability, and the unscrupulously corrupt won out. Prior to acquisition by Technocratic Ford, Leland tried, and failed, to save his struggling company by taking a private contract with two Detroit brothers, to design a vehicle which promised to “save the world” (see The Last Caern p. XX).

On July 14, 1914, one of the Tradition’s paragons, Czar Vargo, a pacifist, decided to stop the First World War. With an armada of airships globally positioned over the cities of the world powers, threatening worldwide disarmament with an ultimatum issued to everyone, Vargo played chicken with Consensus, and with Paradox itself. He suffered *phenomenal* loss, to arguably unparalleled degrees of manifest *correction*

“In Secrecy, This Infection...”

When WWII erupted, the Society was only decades defected from the Union. Many Etherites sided with the Allies, but a shameful number found themselves aligned with the Axis Powers, *progressing and advancing brutalities* with Science put to corrupted and abhorrent application. From Mengele’s evils in the death-camps in the European Theater, to the uncountable horrors of General Ishii’s 13-year genocidal reign through Unit-731 in the Pacific Theater, some Etherites too divorced from the cultivation of wonder — and the humanizing essence of hope — became Fallen in positions of influence over the human experimentation, war-crimes, and darker horrors. Awakened Scientists joined with fascists, Fallen, and supremacists, as the Traditions and Conventions found themselves divided in corrosively familiar fogs of hate. To what extent were these tragedies conducted by the Scientists’ own hubris? Or were they, to the last, corrupted by the Nephandi, and drawn into an infectious conspiracy dating back into the Union days, and *centuries further*? What does this mean for the Tradition, in the present? If the rumors of Nephandic corruption of the Technocratic Union are even partially true, could there be a Society of Fallen Ether hiding in plain sight, as well?

to his reality-deviation. In a flash, a so-called time-wave, the armada, tech, and Scientists vanished from reality and record. Throughout that Great War, other individual Etherites created cruel weaponry, contributing to grotesque battlefield atrocity. In response, their Utopian League developed the Council for the Enforcement of Scientific Ethics, for oversight. Infighting persisted, and a number of Dissidents — dedicated to death-rays, militarized machines, mad-science and human experimentation — refused to conform to these ethical censorship.

Etherite Astro-Eschatonomist Bernhardt “Dr. Comet” Mueller (b. 1937 to Nephandic Nazi parents) left a New Year’s party in 2000, traveling into the future to head-off a recurrently apocalyptic event of meteoric proportion. A detour in this journey brought him to Grosse Pointe’s Rose Terrace, circa 1919, to consult with some werewolf brothers who built cars to fight vampires. Absurd as all of this sounded, Mueller had it on good authority that the future might well depend on a mad scheme involving the Night-Folk, an atomic truck, and a doomsday containment Wonder ballsy enough to stop what was coming.

The heroic Adventurers, whose Will to wonder helped humanity from the brink, fought through the Second World War and beyond. For more than two decades, Doc Eon and his companions opposed fascists, Technocrats, and Nazi *Thule Gesellschaft*. From the front lines of the Hollow Earth and its secret Goro monastery, the mystical Mecca of the Etherites, to the depths of Etherspace itself, Eon defied and *defined* reason in his dedication to safeguarding the elevation of humanity’s Awakening. Jet Boy, and many other Good Scientists, joined in opposition against the Axis, because every good Scientist knows that fascism is the enemy of reason, and to always punch a Nazi.

Hollow Earth

This Realm was once accessible from certain remote locations on Earth, with tales of katabasis going back millennia. Holding many secrets — fabled cities, lost civilizations, monasteries and temples, and mythic races of creatures — the Hollow Earth has long been central to the Etherites (and their predecessors). The mysterious Goro Monks claim a lineage transmitted from the Atlanteans, themselves the keepers of that history. Potent technologies, powers, and still uncharted expanses exist here... for anyone who can find their way in. Technocrats sought to seal the ways permanently to protect Consensus from its influence, but adventurous Etherites may still find their way to the Smoky God. What awaits them, however, is a mystery: Rumors suggest persistent Nazi cults and Nephandic rites continue on, perhaps in some endlessly horrific loop of occult warfare and Science.

A Matter of Minor Corrections

In 1935, a controversy arose with the publication of an Anonymous Edition of *Paradigma*, which illuminated the ongoing white supremacies of the Tradition and the extent to which rich white Scientists had been stealing credit for discoveries and inventions of Etherites of Color, “employed” as colonial servants to the supposed elite. To counter the historic racism, and growing animosity from these Traditionalists, the Progressivists formed to represent and platform diversity in Etheric Science. Plagiarism and theft within Science is supposed to be amongst the worst offenses, but for centuries it was entirely the norm when it supported institutionalized white supremacy.

Postmodernity

Post-war, the Tradition’s journey through the 20th century can be tracked through major conventional

Future Fates

At the dawn of the new Millennium, some declared victory for the Technocracy: a Consensus defined by their constricted conventional science. Events indicate that this might not be the case, however; or, if indeed it was the case, such a triumph was short-lived. Within the first years of the new age, science and reason took backseats to every fucking kind of disturbed impulse, totalitarian conspiracy, and plunderous disregard for anything “ordered” at all. If Technocrats “won” anything, it was *marinated* in marrowed corruption. The rise in “magical” thought, evangelized missionary genocides, and new messianic political cults and other twisted atrocities suggest that the declaration of victory was premature. The Reckoning, the Avatar Storm, Spirit-Nuke, and all the rest? For the Etherites, at least some of them, these topics are a bit moot: There exists at least one timeline in which all that shit happened, exactly like some say it did.

Ascension Warrior? Fallen infiltration? The Iron Hammer? Bam, such conflict. But then there’s *also* the 2012 Mirzaba event, which throws *all* that shit up in the air, because *the Etherites were there*, “after” the Ascension War’s supposed conclusion. Sure, it was possibly a parallel reality, because somebody let a newly Awakened hot-rod kit-basher *travel through time and space* in a trip organized around 8-tracked *Santana*. That’s the thing about Science: Once you unlock multiverse travel and street-race through divergent timelines, *everything is up for grabs*, and the continuity and canon of Consensus is “as the chips fall.” When you swing an axe at the timber of time itself, you’ve already committed to jacking *something* up. When trying to sort what did or didn’t happen as you’ve traveled the spaces between each and both, causality takes on a different meaning. It is entirely possible to find two Etherites who remember events happening in very different ways, disagreeing on the foundations of what has or hasn’t (yet?) occurred even in their own shared lifetimes.

It’s happened before. Remember Czar Vargo? It is more fun this way: Which Realms still exist, or can be reached? Ask three Scientists, get three answers, then go find out for your fucking self. That said? There *do* seem to be less of the old guard around these days, and too few Etherite Chairpersons, and some fuckers swear they see a Red Star out there.

innovations and developments. They became aware of the potency of poetic Science and the development of film and television mediums for conveying influence, thanks to Tesla’s doomed and Fallen affiliate Viereck (later jailed as a Nazi). Convinced of the conflagratory power of media, and intimately aware of Technocratic coercion of the Consensus, the Etherites began to Awaken influential creatives within the expanding industries of film and publishing. Through cinema, pulp fiction, comics, and the midcentury creation of new-wave sci-fi, they held the speculative line against the tides of Technocratic domination of reality for decades.

Meanwhile, their Cybernetic Research Institute was hard at work in seeking to counter the Union’s domination of physical technologies, operating in industrial engineering, automotive, aeronomic sectors, etc. Believing that the public should have access to Ethertech, from robot workforces to “smart” cybernetics, they began working with the Virtual Adepts in the 1960s in ongoing collaboration. From fringe and freak to center-mass milieu of culture and industry, the Etherite Sciences were highly visible through the century.

In 1978, young Chicano Ernesto “Ace” Amanguale inadvertently initiated his own Awakening and subsequently, possibly, saved reality through the trial-run of an experimental hot-rod named *La Fuente*. Launching through space and

time with an 8-track of *Caravanserai* as accompaniment, Ace wound up being greeted by an Ethernaut, Yves, sent by Ace’s own future self to retrieve and effectively docent his younger time-slipped self through the multiverse. Yves chaperoned the two of them into *his* own future, or a parallel universe, to thwart an apocalyptic collision of the Mirzaba comet in 2012. Working alongside a collection of legends from throughout the 20th century, Ace prevented a bad Bruce Willis movie from smashing into Earth. He went on, in some timeline or another, to focus on clean-energy innovations within low-income BIPOC STEM clubs and get word to a time-lost Dr. Comet about *another* oncoming Mirzaba, reinforcing the “recurrent apocalypse” nature of these matters.

The number of Etherites involved with decades of horrific atrocities drove the Tradition to concerted improvements, through the millennium’s end. It served as a cautionary tale for them, moving forward. Beyond monstrous bio-chemical experimentation, twisted members also pioneered sadistic social and behavioral Sciences, in brainwashing, propaganda, and conditioning, expanding their ability not just in subverting whole nations to sickening evil, but to *normalize* it. While humanity never needed any help in the areas of hate, they “benefited” from warped

Sciences of Fallen Ether. The Tradition's Utopians started cleaning house. After watching the Nazis use Etherite social Sciences, the Tradition chose to use those same tools to repair the damage. All but inventing the pop-culture industries of pulp-fiction, film, comic-books, role-playing games, and sci-fi itself, Awakened Scientists engaged as counter-Consensus creatives.

Pre-Millennialism

For a century, industries of entertainment media and the sciences of global society were commandeered toward Awakened change. Seeking not capitalist profits but to repair damages done and facilitate the recovery process for all of humanity, the Etherites utilized those potent social Sciences and communications to steward humanity away from reductive corruptions. With universes of story built to pave *expansively* a way onward with rights and representation for everyone, they hoped to engineer an inclusive future, in which Science stands familiar in Consensus (with less Paradox).

Hopelessly idealistic, they failed to account for the magnitude of corruption in the Consensus, from either Technocrats or the Fallen. Efforts *did* instill messages of wonder, science, and utopian dreams, with pages and screens of fantastic, sometimes non-fictional, super-heroes and Nazi-punching pulp icons, showcasing in a sequence of graduated expansion the expressed diversity of humanized

hope. Etherites simply didn't notice that their methods *worked so well* that they were stolen by stained hands, once again. These methodologies of influence became the basis for a conspiracy of appropriative cooption, lifted in corruption by Nephandic agents. With each step forward in these Etheric progressions, others moving in tandem and dark pantomime soon stole the proverbial stage from the Society. Within the first years of the new millennium, in the shadow of burning Tower times, a new form of "pure and right" twisted ideologues arose from the masses, as it had a century earlier, making ready use of entertainment and social science.

For ages their Dynamic Sciences innovated guns, germs, steel, and diamonds for the naïve purposes of expanding wonder, only to have these subsumed by the institutions for the sole purpose of reductive control. The Etherites persist into the 21st century defined by their contradictions: a grimoire tradition of philosophers of yesterday, and bleeding-edge Science-heroes of tomorrow, with steamed-pulp and engine grease to spare! These wonder-makers have upgraded organizationally to elevate humanity's historically down-trodden and marginalized, platforming genius hitherto ignored by generations of unreasonable minds. From dark matter, aetheory, and quantum studies to normalizing currents of multiverse dimensions in curated pop-culture properties, the Etherites pioneered a polymathic approach to cooperatively countering Consensus for this new era.



Current Events



Not just eccentric pseudoscience throwbacks with Victorian chic and a fondness for superseded theories and obsolete tech, the Society of Ether in the 21st century proudly bastion themselves throughout all of the sciences. From rogue ontologists and hyperlinguists, parapsychologists and quantum social theorists, the Tradition recognizes the value (and vice) in each area of inquiry, and if there's an *-ology* department for it at university, there're members who've focused on them. The whole premise of the ethos of Ether is its all-inclusive polynominality of expression and exploration, for theirs is Science *unbound*. At least, that is the intention; amongst the Tradition are still found some "retrobates" desperate for the inglorious days of colonial white-washings of elitist paternalist essentialism.

Pop-Culture Protagonists

Humanity is never without the darkness of hate and insecurity, so the rise of alternative Nazism, fascism, and public supremacies shouldn't have been a surprise. To the sometimes too-literal Society, it was *quite* a surprise; they believed that "this time" their long-dreamed Utopia could be realized for the Enlightening of all humanity. The rise of misinformation, the lexical appropriation of meaning itself, was as successful a Consensus-conditioning machine of harm as Viereck's pioneering poetic propaganda Science decades earlier. That Nazi poet of Fallen Ether was presumed dead in 1962, though whispers persist that he, or somebody claiming his name, may well have continued propagandizing toward fascisms even into the current era. Perhaps even orchestrating the rise of the Alt-Right and supremacist edgelords of fandom, Viereck was last active in Holyoke, MA. While some might consider worldly politics to be of no concern, beneath that of the Awakened, the Etherites have learned to attend these signs... even when the data points are noticed too late for preventative measure.

The proliferation of print and pulp catering to the masses (embedded with revolutionary counter-culture content) found purchase, even in the constriction of the Consensus. *Wonder* is the nakedly euphoric "eureka!" of the enlightened path; without the former, the latter can never be realized. Ironically, Technocratic short-sightedness engineered Etherite success, when they sought to strangle humanity of dream. In this choking grip, unconscious currents within Consensus found themselves grasping for more, as the institutionalized asphyxiation of imagination

gave way to the rushing *gasp* for the breath of Ether itself. As in kink, or gallows, hypoxia is as does, at least for some, and so rose those of Awakened vision found in absence of respiratory wonder. From comic-books to television, film to fanfic, the influence of science-fiction gasped its centennial breaths out into generations of dreamers.

Waves of universal identity rights, modeled through decades of dream, became not just theories of ivy-towered trivial conjecture but the will of populations intentioned by institution far from theory and thought, and thus... change. A culture of change.

The aim was bold to the point of absurdity, and it worked: the reconstitution of the very wonder stripped away by centuries of colonialism, conquest, crusades, and worse, under the booted heel of you-know-who. Afro-futurism? Billion-dollar blockbuster and a legacy echoing through whole identity groups for generations. Decolonization discourse? No longer confined to "fringe radicals" too easily silenced and shuttled away. With the success of the fictions came the momentous presence of its fandoms, who'd been raised to recognize that the presented world was *not okay*. Even in institutional efforts to subordinate these to the economies of antiquated Consensus came a stirring: Humanity's expression not just of *their* will, but increasingly Awakening Will learned enough to say "no" and collectively — "all or none" — ensure the continuance of this thing sold as fiction but borne of inspired Science.

Through a culture of cons, cosplay, and collected lore, they came: those no longer willing to tolerate the intolerance of a strangle-hold on humanity, willing to invest of themselves in something more than themselves. For many, the first call came as hobbies, or hyper-focused special interests; for others, a way to gain a sense of belonging. Etherites gave the world a reason other than hate to congregate together, built not on reductive division, but expansive inclusive *reason* tempered by the expanding of Aretus's Walls of Troy. Or so they'd hoped. These idyllic dreams often masked an insidiously exploitative conditioning, and once more, Utopia was ripped from its ideological fixtures, pissed on, and passed around to the horrifying chants of frothing acclaim at the predatory harm enacted in the name of something meant... for something *wonderful*. Fandoms showed susceptibility to the Fallen, some emerging just as evil as any Reich.

All, or None

For centuries, Etherites encountered Awakening in places most accessible to the privileged of Western society. Today, they might find the lure of Ether's inspiration in a



comic on their phone, or a streamer's side-hustle for bits and tips. A Utopia of "natural philosophy" or "reason" is neither of these things if it's not centrally focused upon the elevation of those for too long left out of both. The Victorian "Boys Club" is as done as Shatner, and today, the Society's prominence is not derived from prestigious veneer of ivy-beleaguered bullshit but a solemn oath: It isn't Science if it doesn't account for all the moving pieces. Steampunks and sex-workers, Aces, neurodiverse "eccentrics," and more, Etherites rise from all the cardinals, ordinals, and in-between, and they've found spaces outside of academia to Awaken, flourish... and fuck up, all over again, like before. But better, this time. Hopefully.

As this renaissance of cultured wonder, "for everyone," emerged, however, so too did its counter: those corrupted away from "all or none" to "us or none," who didn't want "everyone." The edgelord rose not just in fandoms but mainstream academia and politics, as though to impress, but in truth, it was a call for indoctrinatory recruitment, toward glossy-eyed conspiracy and the erosion of reason. Critical thinking was undermined in favor of a referential flex. Disinformation cults pledging allegiance to fallacious and fascist agenda, "hidden" for ages in plain sight to any who didn't want to see them, grew loud and terrifyingly visible. Eugenics, and institutionalized atrocity, had never *not* been staples in global theatre. They then became a thing proudly brandished, emerging from behind the curtain to take center stage, with brazen displays of corruptions not

just of moral laws but also of the occult and of Science.

With insidiously public spectacles of global media manipulation, political and electoral influence, and the literal unveiling of new concentration camps and kids-in-cages, the corrupted pushback against the decades of Etherite-inspired pop-culture social science machinations have the Tradition's attention. Some less savory Scientists have leaned into the decline in critical faculties of Consensus to selfishly push their Work, as in these times Paradox seems less attendant to them than ever. It's just a matter of time before somebody takes the "go big or go home" ideology too far. This is not the return to wonder that Etherites fight for, as it leverages the ignorance and corruption of humanity, rather than its cooperative elevation.

Hard Science, Weird Science

Thankfully, the Society didn't put all its efforts into those social engineering experiments and focused heavily on conducting advancement in the principles of conventional science. With Ether theories once again given consideration amongst theoretical physicists, wed with Einstein's relativity, and progressed in quantum theory and updated classical Newtonian laws, even fucking plasma-swords, there's *wonder* once more in science. Stripping away the antiquations of old white men in white coats, Etherites ensured that the face of inquiry and spirited reason in the 21st century is as diverse as its voices... paid, platformed, and *tenured*. Within

Factions and the Society of Ether

Current political divides within the Society of Ether can be traced to a core conflict between the **Superseded Establishment** who represent the “old boys club” and those who seek to protect the status quo, **Progressive Futurists** who see a dire need to restructure and reframe the Tradition, particularly in the realms of diversity and social action, and **Divergent Nonsectarians** who either avoid politics out of frustration, lack of information, or because they only notice these concerns on the rare occasion they step forth from the lab and promptly forget the whole thing the moment they get back to work. Each of these divisions claims members of the **Adventurers, Aquanauts, Cybernauts, Ethernauts, Mad Scientists, Progressivists, and Utopians**, with the largest contingent falling firmly within the Divergent Nonsectarian camp. However, the Progressive Futurists are gaining ground recruiting from the Divergent Nonsectarians. Unfortunately, this has spawned a tendency for doubling down on old methods within the Superseded Establishment.

these developments, there’s ever-present excitement to traipse through interdimensional, multiversal, and quantum calamity, throughout the reaches of the Tellurian with newfangled and anachronistic expressions of Ethernautics.

Individual Etherite engagement with the Horizon Realms depends entirely on whether those Etherites in question give a shit about the Horizon Realms. A Tradition of idiosyncratic researchers, they’re not unlike the tenured academics at a university, locked up with their labs and their Science, at times oblivious to the happenings in the outside world or even the rest of their institution. Who cares about what happened to the administration and business building across the campus? They’re busy doing their Work. However, those whose Science does bring them into Horizon may (or may not) find that things have changed. And those who were away in long-term engagements, outside of the material world? Well, they may well be lost altogether, and I’m sure *somebody* is looking for them. That’s what the Ethernauts are for, right?

Go Big, or Go Home

Labs like Kapitènn Kardan’s Cybernautical college, *Tout Kalite Kaw*, berthed in Haiti, have been paying particular attention to environmental phenomena, as in wildfires, quakes, and tsunamis. Following climate change concerns and apocalyptic “natural” disasters, Etherites focus on experimental hardware: tectonic-technologies, waste management, renewable energies, cloudbusters, hydrodissipacitors, etc. From particle colliders for emission-free engines, to temporal-accelerators which turn plastics into sentient microbes for beneficently terraforming

delicate ecosystems devastated by industrious infringements on nature, Etherites include the same fringe science and think-tankery they’ve always had.

Technomantic progression in robotics engineering, intuitive prosthetics and ambulation technologies, and new expressions of Paradox-defying drone innovations keep the Society’s independent labs busy. These areas, however, are soiled with dystopian fervor. Corrupted robotic police dogs, originally designed for disaster rescue applications, are now freely patrolling metropolitan streets, enforcing institutional harms. Remote drones surveil or bomb cities from a continent away. Then there’s that fucking tech billionaire, like so many others. A failed or Fallen student of the *Kitab al-Alacir* lost to his own depravity, fucker had the audacity to acquire an energy company named for an Etherite, bastardizing that legacy by affiliating with human-traffickers catering to the wealthiest echelons. In other words: Just as the Society is well-poised to innovate against the tides of Consensus, bringing humanity closer to Utopia without angering Paradox *too much*, so too are their enemies, who seek the corruption and utter destruction of being.

For the last decade, with Consensus simultaneously catching up in technological areas and falling drastically behind in the areas of reason and regard for wonder, Etherites have taken more seriously their unorthodox approach to the Science of Utopia. Drawing on tools and techniques ancient, antiquated, contemporary, and prospective, the Society is dedicated to its goals of global Awakening. Except in those cases and instances where its membership succumbs, perhaps vulnerable as ever, to the Fallen’s magnetism – or the madness of Quiet.

Notable Personalities

While every Scientist of the Society of Ether strives to produce notable work, these luminaries are at the forefront of the Society.

Dr. Elias Waldman

A worldwide legend, Elias is described as the only Promethean to have Awakened. Reanimated by Etherite Dr. Waldman in the 1700s, Elias provides the basis for Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein*. A philosopher-monk and Scientist, his virtuousness reflects training at the fabled Goro Monastery in the Hollow Earth. (Perhaps the secrets held by the monks could answer the question of *how* a Promethean could have an Avatar, but getting there is harder these days than before.) He gained admission into the Tradition and has lived centuries avoiding the *noise* of the world. Solitary, he emerges from time to time for Society affairs, sharing mysterious Science with a world that will never accept him. There're whispers that some want Elias running the Tradition; surely, his knowledge and experience would serve everyone in the tumultuous days ahead.

Nature: Vigilante

Demeanor: Zealot

Attributes: Strength (Raw Power) 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina (Inexhaustible) 7, Charisma 1, Manipulation (Eloquence) 4, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence (Deep Thoughts) 6, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics (Teaching, Psychology, Philosophy, Religion) 5, Alertness (Omens) 5, Awareness (Mystic Instincts) 4, Brawl (Crowds) 5, Cosmology 3, Enigmas 3, Hypertech (Ethertech Theories) 4, Intimidation (Pants-Crapping Terror) 5, Investigation 3, Medicine (Surgery, "Frankensteinian Techniques") 5, Meditation (Focus) 5, Occult (Atlanteans) 5, Science (Paraphysics) 5, Survival (Tundra) 4, Technology (Electronics) 5

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Avatar 3, Library 4, Sanctum 2, Status 4

Willpower: 10

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -3, -3, -5, Destroyed

Armor Rating: 1 (eight soak dice, total)

Arete: 8

Spheres: Correspondence 5, Force 5, Life 5, Matter 5, Mind 5, Prime 4, Spirit 3

Attacks/Powers: Punch, kick, trample, and crush for Strength + 2 bashing damage; Ferocity; Rapid Healing; Soak Lethal or Aggravated Damage; Soul Sense/Death Sense.

Equipment: Fashionable vintage clothes, *Book of Ether* (Atlantean edition) novelty/tourism trinkets, flintlock pistol (non-functional), hammock, surgeon's tools, vintage

Tamagotchi and Furby, sealed wet specimens (Tesla's brain, Einstein's brain, Larry Niven's eyes), sewing-kit, formaldehyde, Borax, notebook, plutonium demon core.

Image: "Frankenstein's Monster" is toweringly large. He favors loose-fitting clothes appropriate to his location, sometimes decades outdated. He's a Promethean, a sutured/stapled assemblage, and it shows. He's seen as an abomination, repulsive and nightmarish to domesticated gaze. His eyes are kind; a reflection of his soul.

Roleplaying Notes: You are reserved, thoughtful, virtuous, and wise. Your strong moral center and patience could outlast mountains. A Utopian, even today you're full of wonder and hope, with the belief that it's the obligation of the Enlightened to bring about changes for the higher good of all.

Focus: *Bring Back the Golden Age!* Educated by monks following Atlantis's lost caste of mystic Scientists, Elias believes that their Utopia existed, and in its achievable reconstitution today. Blending faith in ancient Atlantean deities and ancestors with derivative weird science crystal devices (involving something called "Etheric Nascence"), he also uses hypertech, believing that the future can be brought into alignment with the Golden Age by bridging pre-history's advanced knowledge with the contemporary sciences.

Risa Yemana-Mercure

Born in 2003 to two part-time parents, Etherites both, otherworldly Science was more familiar than the mundanity of modernity. They Awakened in their mid-teens through the *Kitab al-Alacir* and took over raising themselves... and running their electrophobic father's French estate while he was off saving distant Umbral realms, or whatever he got up to with that suit of his. Spending the colder months with their mother in Hawaii, their childhood was divided between very different worlds, and they identified with both (or, at rebellious times, neither) as young adulthood was reached. With their Japanese family, they go by Rhys (he/him), and as Risa (she/her) while in Europe. Their adventurous approach to Science is informed by a bleak view that the monochrome world is fucking broken, and not damn near enough people are fixing it. The solution? Plugging an extradimensional energy-source, "borrowed" from their dad's laboratory, into a fucking tattoo machine, because *how else are you going to color the world* from a mansion with no electricity? The results are nothing short of miraculous: inky "built-in" biotech Wonders.

Nature: Entertainer

Demeanor: Artist

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance (Captivating) 4, Perception 3, Intelligence (Bright) 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 2, Art (Drawing/Painting) 4, Awareness 3, Crafts (Tattooist) 3, Computer 1, Enigmas 1, Etiquette (International Travel) 4, Expression 2, Firearms 2, Meditation 2, Technology 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Library 4, Node 4, Resources 3, Sanctum 2, Status 2

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1 (leather jacket; four soak dice, total)

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Forces 2, Life 2, Matter 3, Mind 1, Prime 4

Attacks/Powers: Biotech M1919 armgun (100 rounds/day, damage 12, range 800, rate 5); spiked brass knuckles (difficulty 6, damage Strength+1)

Equipment: Café cruiser motorbike, spiked brass knuckles, cell-phone, flask, tattoo equipment, biotech enhancements (M1919 armgun), sterile gauze, vibrators.

Image: Young, biracial, and genderfluid, their appearance changes with their presentation and name. A short hairstyle, or assorted high-end wigs of various colors and lengths, set the tone of their aesthetic. As Risa, she favors modern French fashions, equally comfortable in jeans or a dress, and puts off an air of graceful confidence and wry wit. As Rhys, he's got a roguish, broodingly conservative look: tailored linen suits, collared shirts, with a pocket-watch and hip-flask. Stylish throughout, they seem too young to be so poised. Right arm has elaborate M1919 machinegun sleeve tattoo.

Roleplaying Notes: As Risa, you're cleverly playful with those you like, with no tolerance for being spoken over. As Rhys, you're quieter, even grim, and socially irreverent; you've an indifference which contrasts with Risa. Across the board, you're strong-willed and focused, with a sense of duty, even divorced from contemporary culture; a perpetually conscientious outsider who takes no shit.

Focus: *Tech Holds All Answers*, and whoever knows how to use the tech knows how to paint-by-number across the world. With the correct application of that tech, there's no question that can't be resolved, colorfully, creatively... especially when your tech is extradimensional, speaks telepathically in multiple languages at once, and lets you tattoo colors that literally don't exist yet. If the body's a temple, then it's also a canvas: the blank pages of a grimoire, waiting for the right hand to illuminate it. With ink pigments made with weird science from bizarre rare-earth (and otherworldly) ingredients dictated by their "borrowed" device, they can turn a person's skin into a living Wonder.

Kapitènn Kardan Harris

This famed Haitian Progressivist Cybernaut emigrated to Boston as a young adult, after a traumatic Awakening during the 2010 earthquake which devastated his nation. He found a warm welcome at MIT's famous Media Lab, for his pioneering work on responsive intelligence engineering and his groundbreaking "EtherIQos" robotics engine.

He departed in 2019 after his robots discovered that the department's director had orchestrated millions in funding from then-convicted sex-trafficker and rapist Jeffrey Epstein. Residing on a boat (his marine laboratory) with a robotic crew, a polyglottal Awakened linguist, and students, he runs a school for gifted youth from the parts of the world most in need of those gifts, with experimental Awakened robotics, built as a metaphorical gyroscope of philosophy, science, and spirit. His teachings are modeled on the orthogonal pivot axes of his paradigmatic emblem: a gimbal of True Ether, in which is suspended the infinite all. Guided by an enby trash-goblin Avatar named Raygun, who mentors him by way of tarot dreams and pterodactyl screeches, Kardan is in many respects a model of the Society's changing identity, as he helps to shepherd it into a new roaring twenties. Despite his emphatically cybernautic Science, Kap is also well-connected with Disparate independents in his country, especially those devoted to the *Nago Lwa*. Prior to Awakening, Kardan was himself a *Houngan Sou Pwen* serving Ogou Balendjo.

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Mentor

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 4 (Creative), Wits 2

Abilities: Academics (Teaching) 4, Alertness 2, Athletics (Fencing) 4, Crafts (Marine Repair) 4, Enigmas 3, Hypertech (AI) 4, Jetpack 3, Melee (Machetes) 4, Occult (Vodou) 4, Science (Aeronautics, Cybernetics, Electronics, Engineering, Paraphysics) 5, Technology (Robotics) 5

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Avatar 3, Contacts 3, Cult 3, Influence 2, Library 4, Resources 3, Sanctum 4

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 3 (enhanced coat; six soak dice, total)

Arete: 5

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Forces 3, Life 1, Matter 4, Mind 2, Prime 3, Spirit 2

Attacks/Powers: Sword (difficulty 6, damage Strength + 2/L); flamethrower (damage 3 levels/turn, fire, range 60, rate 1, clip 15); jetpack flight 3.

Equipment: Anachronistic outfit, cutlass, robotics/cybernetics tools, playing cards, rum, cigars, *Kitab al-Alacir* (Haitian edition: *Liv Ètèr*), EtherIQos robot (AI, jetpack style), flame-thrower, gyroscope talisman.

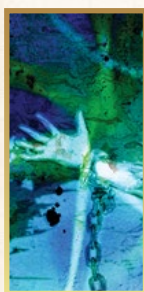
Image: A handsome Black man in his 30s, with hair and beard worn naturally, his attentive gray-blue eyes take everything in. He favors anachronistic maritime attire with brass-buttoned frocks and period hats. He's never without his gadgets, which are an awkward blend of antiques and state-of-the-art robotics kit. Rarely maintaining eye-contact when speaking, he has a disposition of distraction.

Roleplaying Notes: You're haunted by what happened during the earthquake, and redirect all focus into your work. People are lovely and you're quite social, but sometimes they get in the way of what really matters. Sometimes a poet, sometimes quick to annoyance, you run hot and cold depending on the day's workflow (and whether people are doing their part in it, or just getting in the way of progress).

Focus: We live in a *Mechanistic Cosmos*, and the only way to make the changes needed, so that nobody's left behind, is to understand that machine's component parts. That machine is a gyroscopic suspension of Creation in Ether. When a classical gimbal suspension

is illustrated flat, in 2D, it appears as impassable labyrinth, barricaded at intervals: This is the mechanism of the cosmos, for once observed multidimensionally, the barrier-walls are but the pivoted axes of motion, opening the way between all things. Kardan developed his hypertechnology EtherIQos AI from this gimballed multidimensionality. From compasses to rocket engines, the goal is simple: *maintain all degrees of freedom* in the mechanism's rotations, avoid gimbal lock, by *building an engine* to maintain the dynamic solutions of cosmic orientation. Using cybernetics and hypertechnology to create tools — like robots and gyrogonium spurling harmonizers — is a microcosmic exploration of this paradigm.

Paradigm



Society membership is as varied as the fields of science, and while many of these bear only cursory resemblance to one another, there is one common paradigmatic ground. Whether inductive or deductive, all reason begins with observation, followed by a question, followed by an explanation. Science takes these steps further, engaging causality with further inquiry: a prediction, from the aforementioned, which can be tested toward illuminated resolutions. All Etherites have at least a liberal dose of this methodology. But what drives their adoption of this in the first place?

For centuries, Etherite history and identity was written by anthropocentric white European humanists — who pioneered enslaving other peoples and eugenic sterilization — themselves coming from certain Calvinistic hubristics, laden with atrocity as they are. The Western white worldview of the conventions of academic thought are, therefore, rooted in certain (oppressive, reductive) assumptions about the cosmos, as long-ago authored by the very Order of Reason which orchestrated that Consensus. The vocal Etherites of today are not all Atheistic or Secularist supremacists, believing in their own innate superiority, but represent instead global excellence. From the Nigerian Babalawo to the Buryat technoshaman or the Hindu physicist pioneering work on Higgs Boson models from the Alligator Street Shiv Mandir in central Trinidad, for Science to be boundless, it has to be both Science and without boundaries.

Paradigms of Science, then, are as varied and intersecting as all other orientations of identity. While there are certain stereotypes which hold true — *Tech Holds All Answers*, *A Mechanistic Cosmos*, *Might is Right* — the practical reality is that Etherites are *fucking idiosyncratic*, and bound to have their given focus informed by *all the myriad ways* of rigorous

inquiry and experimentation. Development of an Etherite's paradigm is as simple or complex an equation as is necessary for the expressions therein. When in doubt: overthink, intersect, and hyphenetically throw a starlike Killing vector at conventional thought, to allow for truths to be sifted from the wreckage of colliding opposites. Science is rich with exploration of obscurity and contradiction, and a Scientist's paradigm is her efficacious *reasoning for reason*.

Wonders

The Society of Ether generates several wonders in the pursuit of Science. These are some of the most infamous.

•• to ••• Dürerang Blade (Device)

Arete 2, Quintessence N/A, Background cost 4-12 pts.

Made from nigh-unbreakable Etheric alloy from the Hollow Earth (where the metal is forged in the heart of a crystal pyramid, per the manual), they can be forged in any blade style but never reshaped. Having a harmonic, if loud, hum, they're highly resonant with additional enhancements (even from Magick outside of Science). Tested in nuclear blasts without a scratch, they're also inexplicably fond of returning to their wielder's hand if thrown or dropped, bouncily ricocheting off structures — and opponents — in defiance of probability but in compliance with Consensus. As custom blades, they're often tricked out with additional kit appropriate to the intended application: telescoping handles for enhanced optics, lithium calipers, compasses, or scaled tesla-coil reactors, oh my! There are even a few steam-powered variant designs.

System: These weapons do aggravated damage instead of lethal and use the base stats for the type of blade (**Page 20**, p. 450) before additional Enhancements are added. Etheric alloy can't be easily damaged or destroyed by mundane means, similar to Primium. The artifact's Arete is automatically

rolled when thrown or dropped, causing a Forces 2 effect of ricocheting off nearby objects back to its wielder's grip. While the metal itself cannot be modified, they are easily enhanced with additional Magickal or Scientific properties (*Mage* 20, p. 463).

•••• Kitab al-Alacir

Arete N/A, Quintessence N/A, Background Cost N/A

A very important grimoire, the pre-Socratic *Book of Ether* is used to trigger Awakening. Multiple translations exist today, each with unique effect. From the standard Gregorian to the Haitian *Liv Etèr* (which includes additional Matter and Spirit enhancements), and a Kikongo translation said to amplify Avatar potency, the text is treasured and studied by all Etherites.

System: This grimoire is used to trigger Awakening in promising intellectuals, and if successful, grants the first dot in Arete. Unique translations can confer additional enhancements, with proper study, appropriate to the paradigms of authorship. (See *Book of Secrets*, p. 143–144 for more on studying grimoires.)

•••• The Last Caern (Device)

Arete 5, Quintessence 25, Background Cost N/A

In 1919, Etherite Doctor Leland was hired by two fiery-haired brothers from a Detroit automotive company to engineer a unique 24-cylinder alternative fuel vehicle. With nearly unlimited funding, in a hidden laboratory under their Grosse Pointe mansion, Leland worked mechanistic miracles.

What came out was a twenty-six-foot tanker truck, containing a very special reservoir: earthy waters from Ireland's River Barrow, from where the infant god, Mechi, was slain, his essence boiling the river in ancient purifying rite. "The Last Caern" contains the spirit of a dead triple serpent-hearted deity, meant to be kept in trust for particular Armageddonry, as an automotive anti-doomsday device, to unleash as a purifyingly terrible weapon against some all-corrupting end, by fighting one apocalypse-event with another.

The problem? They left it parked in the lab, only accessible by stepping sideways. The sprawling sandstone estate was demolished in 1976 to make room for tacky McMansions, now rumored to house a wealthy suburban collective of Nazi Nephandi and a hive of particularly sick-fuck Night-Folk of the lupine variety. The tanker is legendary: ancient power married to Edwardian future-tech, containing an Otherworldly intelligence. As a nod to the Brothers' cultural heritage, the vehicle is equipped with an "ignition key" in the shape of a sword, which inserts down into the front end, its pommel sitting as hood ornament. Rumor says Leland disassembled and hid the pieces of the sword in parts unknown: winged crow pommel, Etheric alloy machete-style blade, and organite handle. The truck can't be unlocked or used without the completed sword in its hood but otherwise operates as a normal armored heavy truck (if one is able to drive it through the Umbral realms back to material). The ignition functions like a grenade: Once the sword is inserted, rotated 90-degrees, and pulled out, the tanker begins to expand in terrifying slow motion as the



Prime and Entropy break apart the atomic bonds under the slowed Time effect, in the final moment releasing a small nuclear explosion, to unleash the Barrow's god (saving the world from one apocalypse, or ensuring another). Nobody bothered to write down how long the timer was set for.

System: Handling as a heavy truck (**Mage 20**, p. 460), the tanker is nearly indestructible and impenetrable. The assembled "ignition key" machete is otherwise a fancy Dümerang blade (see above), attuned to the vehicle. The

truck is a legendary Wonder: Its nuke-effect (**Mage 20**, p. 455) is enough to do serious damage but is primarily intended to unlock the atomic bonds of the tanker itself. Mechi is a literal *deus ex machina*, with world-changing implications if unleashed casually, as his disposition toward the world is unknown, but that he was slain to protect it from all-consuming end (which makes him probably a good match for any big end-of-days threats that might come along). Storyteller discretion is advised for how any of this plays out.

Unlikely Allies

The Etherites stand apart from the rest of the Traditions, even the Virtual Adepts. Their highly individualistic natures mean that, as with most professional academics, they work for themselves and their Science, and outside of idealistic ventures (like elevating all of humanity), they engage with institutions for the sake of resources.

The Disparate Alliance

As the new generations of Etherites Awaken into the 21st century, and address the rampant wrongs of their predecessors, the Society becomes more authentically representative of its diversity. That means leaning into the party-line: *all or none*. Individualistic academics to the end, the Etherites go where the work is and, with integrated Craft membership of their own, have no institutional ban on field-work or collaboration with Disparates. Some Etherites find that they have much in common with Disparate independence and are only with the Council for its organizational and fiscal advantages. The prevailing view (especially amongst those whose Science is more physical than social) is that the Disparates are a superstitious lot, though as with any research, sometimes having a consulting field-guide is important, for example, while studying cryptids in parts unknown. Their points of contact, rare though they are, tend to be through internal Etherite referrals: An *Ìyánifá* Scientist can certainly put a colleague in touch with a Bata'a *Olòrìlà* as needed. That said? Etherite throwback Traditionalists or secretive eugenic Dissidents are more likely to view Disparates as fodder for study or experimentation than allies toward some shared resolution.

Marauders

Just as the study of mental deviations is of paramount import to Consensus psychology, so too is the study of mental *reality* deviations to the Etherites. Few things in the world are more fascinating in the study of reality, and the goals of a comprehensive polycentric unified cosmological theory, than the so-called Marauders. Though they epitomize an

abandonment of ordered philosophy essential to Scientists, the "mad mages" are nevertheless part of the "all" whom they include in their approach to humanity's Enlightenment. While representing wildcard dangers to any Science due to their innate disruption of order, the Marauders are nevertheless of exceptional interest in some avenues of study, taking center-stage as subject of inquiry. How do they work, and... why? Where do they fit in the principles proposed within the *Kitab al-Alacir* and the pursuits of True Ether?

Some Society members believe that it's in Marauders, not Traditions or Technocrats, that they might find answers essential to unlocking the global Ascension so many seek. The Society must seek to understand these outlier mages who shrug off Paradox. Marauders, while dangerous, deserve respect, even cooperation on occasion. They're inherently included within the headcount of humanity, and the Society of Ether seeks the betterment of all humankind. Some Etherites believe that Marauders may even be closest to sustained Enlightenment of all factions in the Ascension War. Often considered "mad" themselves, many eccentric Etherites — quick to remind, if not conventionally demonstrate, their sanity to the other Traditions — still hold compassion, even strained kinship, for the Marauders.

The Technocracy

Etherites parted ways with the Technocracy in the first years of the 20th century, and rivalries have never resolved. As a rule, the Union represents a puritanical treason against the idealistic Utopia of reason that had once been a shared dream. In practice, sometimes individuals from either group will find that their common aims — or enemies — will bring their objectives into temporary alignment. This is less an allegiance and more a provisional cease-fire in order to deal with some mutually damning threat, as in the case of Society members tag-teaming the Nephandic *Thule Gesellschaft* in the Hollow Earth with the Void Engineers decades ago. While this reluctant cooperation crushed a major element of the Fallen's power base, it was short-lived, with the Engineers

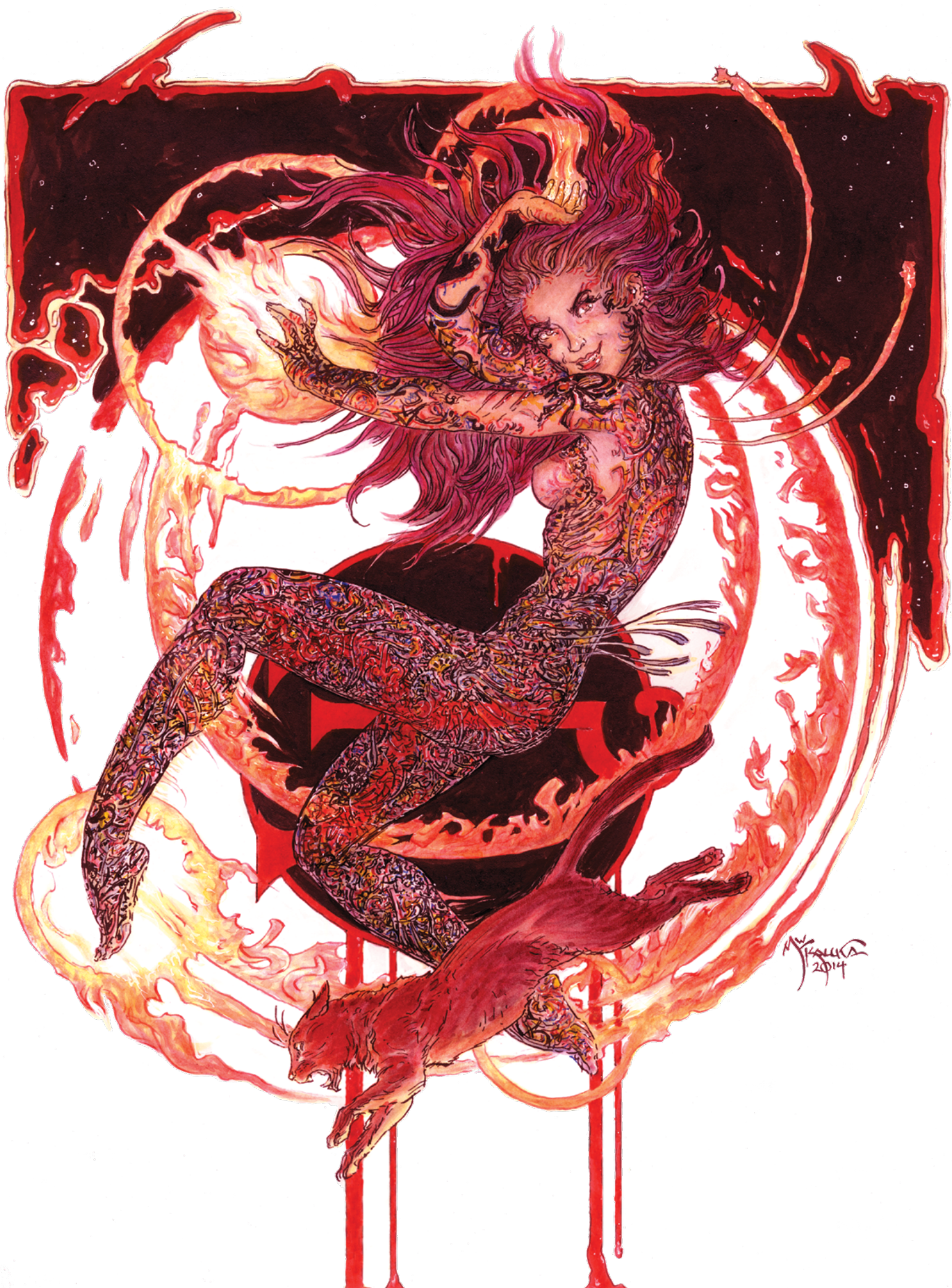
seeking to *seal access* to the Hollow Earth because it defied Consensus, and the Etherites seeking to proliferate its secrets for all the world. To imply that there's deep distrust between the two groups is an understatement.

As far as the Society is concerned, the Union's biggest lie is right there in the name: They're no Technocracy at all, and never have been. They're a bureaucracy; they don't have a "rule of technology;" they have a "rule of the desk," and it's in the drawers of their dusty executive furnishings that they *hide* technology from humanity. They've always been easily infiltrated, manipulated, because their "science" and "technology" have always been secondary considerations in the shadow of small-minded men at big desks overcompensating insecurity in their inadequacy of Will and desperate need for control over other, in lieu of real power. But it would be a mistake for any Etherite to underestimate the threat of the Technocracy's reach. It would be a bigger mistake to *trust* them.

Balance and Orientation

Scientists are often assumed to exist in awkward continuum between Technocrats and Traditions, with identity struggles defined by those polarities. A more accurate polar representation would be the Society sitting between Marauders and Nephandi, as these respectively represent the largest threats to Etherite stability, and their true internal crisis. In pursuit of boundless wonder, they risk the Quiet of madness. In pursuit of boundless reason, they court the familiar throes of Fallen Ether. Their time in the Union, as with the Council, has been about the balance between *these* extremes. The true model is not a linear continuum but a compass in the hand of each Etherite: orienting themselves, their Science, toward the organizations which will keep them from the two dead-ends they're otherwise drawn toward as moths to flame.





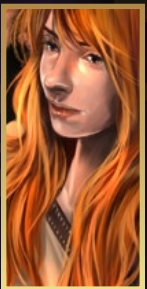
AKI KAWAKA
2014

VERBENA

"We are the children of the witches you could not burn."

— Common Protest Saying

Life Among the Green



The scream of agony during childbirth; the wail of a baby only moments old. The gasp and groan of sexual climax. The dying shriek of an animal slaughtered for sacrifice and sustenance. There's deep magick in these sounds, a primal energy reaching beyond consciousness and catching hold of ancient powers hidden beneath civilization's detritus. Magick is found in blood and death and birth and orgasm and everything you know and feel but cannot put into words.

Here, in such a place of power, stand the Verbenae. They've stood here for thousands of years, drawing on primordial wisdom to work their magic. Cycles and balance define Verbenae practice. The cycles of the Moon, seasons shifting into one another, even the change from day into night and back into day. Verbenae understand how to balance the soul's own energies, and the greater cosmic balance requiring justice for every harm. At the core of this understanding is *life*. Life, death, rebirth.

Verbenae reject standard memorization and endless study among dusty grimoires in favor of a stark wisdom gained through experience and pain. They care little for specific degrees of advancement though respect someone's place in their current life-cycle. Their achievements make the Tradition a crucial member of the Council of Nine. The very formation of the Council owes itself in large part to a few brave Verbenae who survived atrocities committed by the Order of Reason during the Inquisition.

The Verbenae pursue sex and drugs, but not as the Ecstatics do. They honor sex in its generative aspect and take drugs like

mushrooms or peyote to understand the enlightenment the Earth wishes to bestow. They embrace death, but not as the Eurhanatoi. Death is a process, a step necessary for the creation of new life. They study, but not as the Hermetics do. They reject endless memorization and repetition in favor of learning whatever lessons life offers them.

Though the Verbenae see themselves as servants of their communities, calling themselves 'witch' as a sign of wisdom, others cannot help but view them with suspicion. They bring healing when others lose all hope, put their thumbs on Justice's scale, and guide leaders to making the correct decisions.

Currently, the Tradition faces several challenges. For all their pretensions to wisdom and understanding, some aspects of Verbenae belief have calcified. Though they revere the Goddess-given Old Ways, a practitioner cannot always fully observe these ways and remain in the modern world. Conflicts abound between the techno-pagans who see nothing wrong with a digital Book of Shadows and those who shrink in horror at the thought of bringing modernity into their sacred spaces. Proud of their divine heritage, established Verbenae families clash with the less privileged of their order. Indigenous healers demand the Tradition value and respect their own practices as much as those derived from European paganism.

And above it all, one question looms. How will mages shape, and be shaped by, the 21st century? The small-o old ways of doing things are no more. In such a world, what role should the Tradition who consistently think of themselves as both mortician and midwife play?

A Chronicle of the Old Ways

From the hand of Kamerika Shula, High Priestess of the New Hope Farm coven, written as a gift to her daughter on the occasion of her Awakening.

Our magick is old, as old as the first flowering plant and the first drops of blood sinking into primordial soil. Though the Tradition properly formed mere centuries ago, the lore embraced by the Verbenae stretches back eons. We embody a wisdom so old it existed not just before civilization but perhaps even language itself. Our magick is an intuitive understanding of the world around us, our place in it, and how to create change using such wisdom.

The first Verbenae called themselves the Wyck, bringing the gifts of enlightenment we now call the Old Ways. Beyond that, I cannot fully describe them. Yet I notice how every ancient culture speaks of divinities who came from Beyond to teach the secrets of civilization: Anansi, Prometheus, Spider Grandmother. I revere these deities as representing what little we understand of the Wyck.

The Aeduna

Just as these old legends speak of the Wyck coming to Earth, they also speak of the Wyck leaving. They gave the world one last gift before departing, however. The Wyck mixed their blood with ours in the Great Rite and thereby created the Aeduna. These you may think of as the first true Awakened. Empowered by their Wyck-granted heritage and the Old Ways, the Aeduna served their communities as healers, oracles, midwives, and clerics.

These proto-Verbenae showed up wherever a wise woman found herself needed, spreading across the world — temple priestesses in Minoan Crete, druids on Mona, Izinyanga among the Zulu, and elsewhere across the globe. In many places, they called us only by our titles: medicine, mystic, mother. Though we carefully preserved our Wyckan bloodlines, some took apprentices from outside the blood.

As we spread across the world, as our practices developed, some Aeduna split off to follow different paths. Though they do not remember our shared history in quite the same way, we nevertheless honor our ancient ties to the Sahajiya and Kha'vadi. We do not, however, honor a different common ancestry.

The Cosians

I speak now of the Cosian Circle.

At first, we welcomed these sages hoping to unlock the body's deepest secrets. We taught them the secrets of herb and song and charm, how to tailor each treatment to an individual patient's spirit, mind, and body. Our knowledge fell short of their expectations, however. They sought to

reduce the magick of Life to little more than numbers and formulae.

We thought such an approach little more than ill-advised. Then, however, we discovered how far the Cosians felt willing to go in pursuit of their aims. They sought out other creatures of magick, taking them apart to understand how they worked. Cosian "physicians" plucked the wings from faeries to understand how they flew and dissected dragons to find their fire. They did not even spare their own children, forcing on them more experiments in a perversion of how we honor our Aeduna heritage.

We repudiated the Cosians. They repudiated us in kind. We thought the schism would end there. Instead, we failed to understand the new approach to magick which the Cosians represented: those who wish to use magick by controlling it. To their sorrow and ours, the Cosians would not be the last order to treat magick so.

Rome and Mona

I speak now of Mona and her destruction.

A beautiful, magical grove, Mona for centuries served as the Aeduna's beating heart in the British Isles.

Rome's priests, influenced by the Cosians, performed their rites with neither belief nor sincerity. They embraced superstition while rejecting spirituality. The approach of Roman magi to the Craft was so antithetical to ours, conflict became inevitable.

As the eagle's empire spread into Albion, our druids led the Celtic resistance to conquest. The Romans responded by committing the unthinkable: Mona and her druids burned.

This was not death as we understood it. Mona's destruction had no place in any rebirth cycle. It was evil; an act committed for power. In her ashes, Rome planted not the seeds of new growth, but only tragedy which flowered into new conflicts. Even though Rome eventually died, it was reborn as the Church of the One God, and conflict again became inevitable.

The Burning Times

They say we died by the score when the Inquisition came. We did not. We are masters of Life itself. How can an angry man with nothing more than a torch and pitchfork threaten a Verbenae, especially when her coven stands with her?

Nevertheless, the Inquisition, the cover by the Order of Reason acted, harmed us. Our hedge witch sisters, always welcome in our covens, proved less able to protect themselves. And though we remained largely untouched, we had to witness innocent, unAwakened women die because the Inquisition accused them of living according to our ways. So, while we didn't die, not the way they say it, we suffered.

Most of us responded with secrecy, disguising our practice of the Craft as kitchen chores.

We found some solace, however, when we realized out of the pyre's ashes the Council of Nine would grow.

Nightshade and William Groth

She was a powerful Druid; he followed the Alemanni Old Ways. They survived the Burning Times together and recognized the need for the Awakened to unite against future threats. Nightshade had already formed a rough alliance with an Ecstatic, Chorister, and Hermetic. Groth recognized the Order of Reason's true goal: an end to the Awakened and all magick.

The solution seemed obvious. The Awakened must overcome their petty bickering and put aside squabbling at least long enough to come together and fight this existential threat. To succeed, the Aeduna's children, now scattered to the winds, must gather.

After performing the Great Rite together, Nightshade traveled into the west while Groth journeyed east. Groth encountered the Akashayana, and though he did not survive the trip, his bravery impressed the order to the extent they agreed to become part of the newly forming Council in his name. Nightshade found herself in places of unimaginable beauty and power, crossing the oceans in pursuit of her quest.

Blessed be Nightshade, who recovered so many children of the Aeduna whom we'd forgotten and who had forgotten us. She brought the wild-grown branches of our family tree back together. They were as-yet untouched by the Order (though we knew such conflict would come in time). Their ways were not the ways of Druidry or European paganism, but they were without a doubt the Old Ways.

Sadly, many Verbenae have not treated these craft-mates as honorably and fairly as they deserve. Some of this, blame on the general arrogance of mages. We know our own truth to be the truth and everyone else living in error. But Nightshade and Groth's Celtic-influenced practices impacted how the Verbenae came to think of themselves. But I shall speak of these things later.

The First Coven

I speak now of tragic, doomed Eloine.

As a symbol of the new Council and its goals, one member from each Tradition joined what we call the First Coven. We chose a wise woman named Eloine to represent our ways, while forming our collective identity not as Aeduna but Verbena.

Eloine quite obviously loved her coven-mate Heylel Teomim, even having two children with them. We hoped their love might prove capable of protecting the Council,

the Verbenae, and the Traditions from the Order of Reason. I'm sure you know by now it did not. Heylel betrayed their beloved and their coven to the Order of Reason. Eloine's children vanished, and only the Wyck knows what became of them. Heylel himself was subject to Gilgul, while broken-hearted Eloine gave up the Craft entirely. Only fear of the havoc our enemies would wreak kept the nascent Council of Nine together.

March of Empire

Our non-European craft-mates fared far worse. Though we resisted eradication as a Tradition by the Order of Reason, others were less lucky. Order-backed armies spread across the world, finding the places where the Old Ways persisted and rooted them out. They were not gentle. They starved elders and teachers, stealing their children away before the young grew old enough to begin learning. Ponder the wisdom we lost, which the world lost, and grieve.

We did what we could, but many leaders among the Verbenae found themselves too wrapped up in preventing their sacred groves from falling victim to Enclosure Acts and otherwise defending their covens from this so-called March of Progress.

We felt the impact on a spiritual level, too. Even when the Church of the One God ruled, our craft-mates found ways to achieve balance. Ours is the way of the Goddess and the God working together, and many a Verbena disguised her practice with Marian devotion. In those years, however, reason ruled all. Society looked down on the intuition and wisdom forming the core of Verbena practice. Even the other Awakened fell victim to such mindsets, deriding us and presuming us weak. If we ever truly had a Burning Time, it happened under the shadow of colonialism, not Inquisition.

We responded how we could, but the onslaught proved more than most could handle. Witches now hid their craft. Grimoires became cookbooks, and sacred ritual tools transformed into humble kitchenware. Once-massive groves became small gardens and parks. Our tradition of handing wisdom down through family lines solidified (some say calcified).

A New Age

We had hope as one terrible century closed out and a new one began. Despite our suffering, spiritualism and neopaganism had revived an interest in the Old Ways among the general masses. "Secret societies" formed, the wealthy playing at covens and magick. At first, we welcomed this revival.

We should not have.

At the very least, we should have looked harder at some wishing to uncover the Old Ways; especially the ones evincing an interest in Norse rune-magic and Groth's style

Future Fates: Where's Eloine?

The Ascension Warrior who destroyed Doissetep claimed to be Heylel Teomim reborn. If that's true, where's their wife? Mages with strong ties to each other often reincarnate in tandem, after all. Could Eloine have a hand in Heylel's return?

of Alemmanic paganism. Too late, we realized these men, calling themselves Thule, did not want understanding but power. And far too late, we realized to what ends they put their power. We expelled them, but the damage had been done.

Certainly, war in Europe was inevitable. But the rune-magic we'd taught our former apprentices added to the power of the Nazi war machine. Feeling the weight of such responsibility, the Verbenae volunteered on the side of the Allies. We gathered in England, harnessing the magick which had laid dormant in the land for long ages. Our grand working bent wind and wave to protect Albion. We succeeded. The Reich never crossed the Channel.

Time of Aquarius

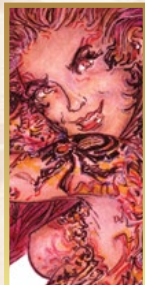
Flush with post-war prosperity, the daughters and sons of those who fought experienced a tremendous shift in collective understanding. Their open embrace of love, unity,

and world peace was a sight to behold. We felt in some ways the mortal Awakening we waited so long for finally unfolded. All our suffering and privation over the previous centuries proved the death part of the eternal cycle. Now, we could enjoy a full re-flowering of our practice.

Some witches began edging a toe or two into the open. A few brave covens opened their ranks to the questioning. We grew, I think, a little too brave, thumbing our noses at the Technocracy a bit too openly. To our sorrow, we underestimated how they changed their own ways with the times.

The Satanic Panic wasn't as horrifying or destructive as it could have been, in part because the Technocracy chose not to bring their full strength to bear. They just wanted to remind us of our place, chasing us back into the shadows. All at once, the unAwakened saw evil in our holy symbols while witchcraft became a joke, something done by teenage girls.

Modern Verbenae



The challenges facing the Verbenae differ little from those faced by every organization prizing tradition: how to preserve good and useful wisdom while adapting to the demands of 21st century magic. Though the women's liberation and queer rights movements freed many Verbenae to practice their craft more openly, the Tradition's membership struggles with hidebound notions of who "counts" as a true witch.

Country Witch, City Witch

In centuries past, Verbenae practiced their craft in the wild. They formed deep and abiding connections to the land, and the life living on it, and structured their lives to align with the agricultural seasons. Many elder Verbenae continue observing these ways, living in remote cabins, or at least within a short drive of the deep wilds. Some covens form compounds in this way, choosing to live in remote areas untouched by overly mundane energies.

But as attitudes regarding land shift, so has the

relationship between a young Verbena, her community, and her environment. The rise of urbanization as a global trend means many Verbenae Awaken in the hearts of cities or suburbs. How can they develop a meaningful relationship with the land when the land is mostly asphalt and AstroTurf?

Urban witches adapt in several ways. Many of them carry forward the practice of hiding in plain sight observed by their foremothers. Their cast-iron pans double as both cookware and cauldron, while lovingly tended patio gardens produce the herbs needed for their foci. In some places, these witches manage to cultivate their own tiny, twenty-square-foot groves in community gardens. And the herbs these witches can't grow, the nearby supermarket or pagan store provides. When she really needs to commune with nature, an urban Verbena turns to state parks and campgrounds. In between camping trips, she casts her hexes using subway maps and follows power lines instead of ley lines.

Traditional witches disdain such practice, viewing them as lazy and misguided. If the traditionalists had their way, the Verbenae would retreat to the few truly wild places left in the world. Some go so far as to construct their

Future Fates: Cosmic Midwives

If Horizon falls, the Verbenae take an appropriate mourning period before rolling up their sleeves and getting to work. Death to a witch is only a step between life and rebirth. Nightshade and Groth built the old council; now the Verbenae must build whatever comes next.

own Horizon Realms to sequester in. Urban witches have their own criticisms regarding such retreat from the world. Witches, they believe, have a sacred obligation to serve their communities. Though they struggle to fully observe the Old Ways, urban witches believe they cannot and should not abandon Earth-centric life.

Techno-Wicca

Though one doesn't often think of high-end tablets or databanks when pondering the Craft, the newest generation of Verbenae grew up in a world surrounded by technology.

Naturally, some of them incorporate digital instruments into their workings. Some simply prefer keeping their Books of Shadows in electronic format, while others go further.

Ashe Lombard works at the forefront of this Green Revolution. Ashe studied environmental science before their Awakening and is keenly aware of the raw computing power found in plants. The young Verbena wants to carry the concept of communing with nature to the fullest extent possible. To this aim, the techno-witch has developed a complex system of bio-computers. Though the other Verbenae deride their 'plant cyborgs,' some Virtual Adepts have questions about a few strangely verdant corners of the Digital Web.

Blood of the Wyck

Verbena history teaches that, through the Aeduna, the first practitioners of the Old Ways descended from divine beings called the Wyck. As the Tradition developed, due to both magickal and mundane pressures, many Verbenae took apprentices from within their own families. These Verbenae's descendants thus now possess a tendency to boast they come from this bloodline or another. Nightshade



Future Fates: Technocracy Ascendant

Should the Technocracy prevail, one might assume the Tradition openly espousing the Old Ways finds themselves the first destroyed. A fair assumption, but ever since Mona, the Verbenae taught themselves how to hide in plain sight. Many Verbena workings need only a sharp knife, window-box garden, and coded "recipe book" to function. Plus, who's better suited to leave it all behind and take up residence in a woodsy cottage than a Verbena? Far away from technology's reach?

While the Technocracy might think they've won against the Verbenae, they underestimate how easily a witch goes to ground. There will always be gardens. There will always be kitchens. There will always be wind and wave and storm and flower and sex and death and birth. The Verbena need only wait this out, as they have every other setback since the Aeduna's time.

and William Groth's descendants enjoy the most respect as a powerful Verbena bloodline, but several other established families wield considerable influence within the Tradition.

Such Verbenae frequently find themselves rising in positions of leadership, only to face accusations of nepotism. Elder Verbenae assert their niece or granddaughter simply proved herself the best-suited for whichever honor she received. In many cases, they aren't even wrong. Bloodline Verbenae have readier access to Mentors, Nodes, and the Tradition's collective wisdom. These lucky practitioners see little reason to question their blessings and point to their own hard work as justification for whatever benefits they enjoy.

Modern social movements have given Verbenae without a noteworthy family line, or even a family line at all, the proper language to describe and push back against their systemic exclusion. Some of the less-conservative lineages now make overtures to certain talented young witches, offering adoption. Verbenae have always practiced adoption, of course, and many family lines propose this as a fair solution. Though some witches seem grateful for acknowledgement and acceptance, other, fierier, Verbenae insist this is no solution at all. They agitate for an entire dismantling of the family inheritance system — shocking the eldest Verbenae who remember the times when such methods were the only way to ensure Verbena wisdom survived at all.

No solution acceptable to all involved has yet emerged, and many a cross-coven Esbat celebration falls apart due to bickering and bitterness. Especially because the question of bloodline tutelage feeds into a much larger issue facing the tradition: the systematic exclusion of entire paradigms within the Tradition.

Druid, Shaman, Witch, Healer

In large part thanks to Nightshade and Groth's outsize influence on the Tradition, plus prevailing mortal attitudes, Verbenae historically tended to emphasize their Celtic,

Norse, and Hellenistic pagan paradigms. When many covens come together in celebration, they frequently observe the European holidays of Imbolc, Samhain, Yule, and others. Even the language used to describe the ritual implements and practices borrow heavily from European-derived traditions.

This has quite understandably perturbed the Verbenae following indigenous or tribal paradigms. Though the Kha'vadi accept any number of indigenous Awakened into their Tradition, not every practitioner finds a home among the Dreamspeakers. Many find themselves more comfortable with the focus on Life and land the Verbena teach. Some join the Verbenae deliberately, rejecting the Traditional stereotypes of indigenous magic which pigeonholes them into the Kha'vadi.

As discussions unfold over the issue of bloodline inheritance and nepotism, Verbenae practicing indigenous paradigms have grown more vocal about their own place within the Tradition. Led by Takoda Standing-Bear, they insist on an equal place in the circle. Their Celtic and Euro-pagan counterparts don't necessarily oppose such concessions, but neither do they fully understand the depth of the problem.

A few elder Verbenae, those leading not only covens but entire bloodlines, *do* resent the rising sentiment among their indigenous craft-mates. They see this outspokenness as part of a larger push by jealous youngsters to deprive the wisest and most accomplished Verbenae of their hard-earned authority. Most indigenous Verbenae assert such isn't their goal — though some absolutely do want to see the bloodline system dismantled within the Tradition and new paradigms elevated.

For now, the conflict appears stuck. Those who most wish change possess little power to effect it; those who have the greatest power see little reason to wield it. The various factions within the Tradition keep talking past each other, waiting for the other side to blink. Progress will assuredly prevail, but who among the witches has the talent and determination to create such change?

Future Fates: Horizon in Ashes

While many Traditions deeply grieve Horizon's loss, and everything destroyed with it, the Verbenae take an entirely different viewpoint. Horizon died because all things must die. Horizon will be rebuilt because such is the way of creation. And if the Verbenae are to have any power in this new world, they must take the lead on this ambitious project.

Future Fates: Horizon Persistent

Modern Verbenae unite behind idea that their Tradition stands uniquely qualified to serve as midwives to whatever iteration of the Ascension War comes next. Such belief helps them overcome the various internal conflicts threatening to tear the Tradition apart. If Horizon survives? What purpose do the Verbenae have now?

Likely, the Verbenae find their influence waning as the Tradition diverts their attention to such conflicts. Some become radicalized, believing the only solution is to impose the Old Ways on unbelievers. By violence, if necessary. Sacrifice makes way for new life.

Life, Death, Rebirth

All such conflicts pale in comparison, however, to a slow, collective realization of the Verbenae's duty in a challenging modern world. A core tenet of the Old Ways embraces the sacred cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The old must pass away again and experience a new birth. Fields must lay fallow over the winter in preparation for spring, while elders pass away to make room for the young. A mage dies only for another to inherit her Avatar. The Verbenae don't know exactly what comes next for Creation but take seriously their role as those charged with bringing the new world into being, in harmony with the Old Ways.

And who stands more fit to oversee this rebirth than the Verbenae? None are as suited as them to serve as spiritual midwives. No other Tradition keeps alive the wisdom of the Wyck and the gifts of the Aeduna as the Verbenae.

Of course, the question must arise: What form will this rebirth of Awakened society take? And how shall mortal society reflect such a rebirth? Will the people live simply, giving up eight hours of desk work for twelve hours of farm work? As ardently as some wish a return to a pastoral life, progress's march never calls retreat. Whatever form the new society takes, the Verbenae understand their role as the guides and guardians for such.

Verbenae observing different paradigms squabble over the particulars. Indigenous and elder Celtic Verbenae make common cause in wishing to see an end to urbanization. On the other end of the spectrum, newly Awakened witches explore the potential of uniting biology with cybernetics. The victor remains unclear. All anyone knows is if the Verbenae fail to seize the moment, they risk falling into irrelevance.



Notable Personalities

The witches detailed here represent the past, present, and future of the Verbenae.

Kaya Shula-Fairmont

Three things happened on Kaya's sixteenth birthday. She experienced menarche, she Awakened, and she learned the truth behind her father's death.

Her mother, the powerful witch Kamera, raised Kaya with stories of how her father had died to save their home, New Hope Farm. On Kaya's birthday and Awakening, Kamera decided her daughter deserved the truth. Jon Fairmont had died by Kamera's own hand, a willing sacrifice to revive the farm's Node. The truth devastated Kaya. Though she grew up acclimated to Verbena ideas about blood and sacrifice, her father's death made it personal. Kaya couldn't hate her mother, but neither could she remain at New Hope.

She left home, taking with her only the bare necessities and foci. Kaya hitchhikes from coven to coven, connecting with Verbenae along with Awakened from other Traditions. Like many young Verbenae, she's thrown herself into the world and its problems, hoping to exchange wisdom for service.

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Activist

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 3, Cosmology 3, Drive 1, Empathy 2, Enigmas 1, Esoterica 1, Expression (Harp) 1, Firearms 1, Investigation 1, Medicine (Traditional Remedies) 4, Occult (Neopaganism) 4, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Arcane 1, Contacts 3, Status 2

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 3

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Life 3, Mind 2, Prime 1

Attacks/Powers: Kaya focuses on defensive magick and situational awareness to keep her out of danger. If she must fight, Kaya draws upon the myriad poisons and enchanted dagger in her satchel to prevail.

Equipment: Blessed silver athame, overflowing satchel, defensive knife.

Image: Kaya's features display her blend of African and European ancestry. Farm and then nomadic life have left her physically fit. She carries a knapsack stuffed with her worldly possessions and dresses with whatever witchy, natural-fiber-based garb she scrounges up from thrift stores or garage sales encountered on the road.

Roleplaying Notes: You deliberately seek to test yourself against the world and grow your power by overcoming adversity. And while your mother raised you with Verbena values, you struggle, like any young adult, to understand what those values personally mean for you.

Focus: *Creation's Innately Divine and Alive.*

Ashe Lombard

Ashe grew up reading ever-more panicked headlines regarding the state of the world and climate change in particular. From a young age, they decided their life's work would be fixing this issue and saving the world. They studied environmental science and Awakened in the process of writing their dissertation. As their dissertation focused on green technology, such learning has become part of their paradigm.

Now, Ashe pursues ways to unify technology with the Old Ways. Rather than meditating in a tranquil grove, Ashe prefers to jack directly into the tree's neural matrix (or whatever a tree has for a neural matrix). They have developed an impressive array of bio-computers, harnessing the energy of seed and soil to power their machines, some of which have found root in the Virtual Web. While other Verbenae deride Ashe's foolishness, they have attracted some attention from Virtual Adepts.

Future Fates: Eloine's Children

The Verbenae revere the witch given a place among the eight other Traditions. They also respect the power found in heritage. Thus, a gap makes itself quickly apparent: *What happened to Eloine's children?* The record clearly states she bore a boy and girl by Heylel Teomim. Their fates became unknown after Heylel's Gilgul. Parented by two powerful mages, their eventual Awakening seems likely.

After her beloved's betrayal, Eloine retreated to a remote hermitage and never revealed where she hid her offspring. But surely, they survived, to bear children of their own. What sort of hidden lineages exist among modern Verbenae? What generational goals do they work towards?

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Heretic

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence (Book-Learning) 5, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 2, Awareness 3, Computer (Data Systems) 4, Cosmology 2, Drive 1, Empathy 3, Melee 2, Occult (Neopaganism) 4, Politics 1, Research (Hidden Sources) 4, Science (Biology) 4, Technology (Technomagick) 4

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Contacts 3, Library 3, Resources 4, Status 2

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: None

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Life 3, Prime 1, Spirit 2

Attacks/Powers: Ashe is useless in a fight outside their Node. In combat, they cobble together a Life/Prime/Correspondence effect before running away. Within their Node, however, they call upon the ambient energy to tear apart their enemy with cyber-vines or plant-powered smart bombs.

Equipment: Cyborg Venus flytrap, green battery pack, enhanced tablet.

Image: Ashe, a genderfluid individual, enjoys mixing up their appearance and dresses to reflect their changing mood. They definitely prefer durable and practical clothing, suitable for both server farms and vegetable farms. Their close-cut hair changes color frequently.

Roleplaying Notes: You strike a delicate yet distinct balance between hippie and nerd. You're passionate about your quest to bring technology to nature (or is it the reverse?). The criticism of other Verbenae usually means you keep quiet about your passion, but you happily speak at length should someone display interest in your work.

Focus: *Tech Holds All Answers*

Takoda Walking-Bear

A member of New Hope, Takoda assumed a fatherly role for young Kaya after Jon's death. He taught her the lore her mother didn't (or wouldn't). After Kaya abjured her mother and left the farm, Takoda turned his efforts to mentoring other young witches. He pushed through a loosening of who could learn at the farm. Now, New Hope accepts any student with a sincere interest in learning and who brings something of value in exchange.

His new role as Tradition mentor has pushed Takoda to grow more vocal regarding the subtle inequalities he's always seen among the Verbenae. Supported by his coven-mate Kamera, herself an African healer, New Hope has become one of the centers of inter-Tradition activism and agitating for change. Though Verbena elders now view the farm with suspicion,

such attitudes only make the place a more attractive destination for young witches. Takoda has grown fiercely protective of his students and will take on the entirety of Tradition leadership to ensure they enjoy a more equitable existence.

Nature: Artist

Demeanor: Mentor

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma (Inspirational) 4, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception (Hawkeye) 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Awareness 4, Crafts 2, Cosmology (Realms) 5, Empathy 3, Enigmas (Metaphysics) 5, Esoterica 3, Firearms 2, Investigation 3, Leadership 2, Medicine 2, Meditation 3, Occult (Mystic Lore) 5, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 3, Contacts 2, Resources 2, Status 2

Willpower: 9

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 6

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 2, Life 5, Mind 3, Prime 1, Spirit 3

Attacks/Powers: Anyone wishing to attack the farm must first get past the wards Takoda personally maintains. A master of Life, Takoda simply stops his opponent's heartbeat if attacked. The Verbena wise man focuses, however, on identifying potential conflicts and defusing them before they lead into a fight. In defense of another, especially a student, Takoda fights ruthlessly.

Equipment: Sacred sage incense, hunting knife, teaching puzzle.

Image: Takoda is of Native American descent and works his tribal heritage into his wardrobe. Long hours spent working outdoors at New Hope have left his skin sun-kissed and incapable of hiding his age. White streaks shoot through his black hair, which Takoda carefully tends.

Roleplaying Notes: To his students, you strive to strike a balance between strict and kind. You know your students are capable of so much more than they believe of themselves and want to push them to excel without destroying their egos. In private, you often seek out the spirit of your grandfather for guidance. You feel his obligation keenly and want to know you're living up to expectations.

Focus: *It's All Good – Have Faith!*

Cybele

Despite her parents trying to raise her otherwise, Cybele grew up knowing she was a girl. Immediately upon adulthood, she moved out and began transitioning, taking for her own name that of a goddess whose priestesshood was comprised of women like her. Thus inspired, Cybele delved deeply into neo-pagan practice and found her Awakening.

Gender and Practice

Many outside the Tradition expect the modern re-awakening regarding gender diversity to manifest as a sticking point among the Verbenae. They are mistaken.

The Verbenae, especially the non-European practitioners, have long accepted the widest range of gender identities among their witches. Though Verbenae honor a God and Goddess as a dualistic, mated pair, they also understand the primal truths about identity and spirit and the strength of a mage's own will. Verbenae care less about a given priestess's physical form and more the type of energy she surrounds herself with and puts out into the world.

Some covens go even further, encouraging female practitioners to perform certain rituals in the God role and male practitioners the Goddess role, as a method to gain greater self-awareness and thus magickal power. Intersex and genderfluid Verbenae occupy whichever space they choose, often finding themselves revered for their inner sense of balance.

Cybele's Avatar is *loud*. Her Awakening gifted her with memories of over a dozen lifetimes, which Cybele struggles to make sense of. As a result, while Cybele is a dedicated Verbena witch, she quests for wisdom in places a mage might otherwise not go. She's visited vampiric Elysia, danced beneath the full moon at Garou Caerns, and drunk enchanted wine at Kithain freeholds. She wishes to put her memories in their proper context, understanding the full ebb and flow of how magick flows through the world.

Nature: Romantic

Demeanor: Sensualist

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma (Bold) 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 2, Awareness 3, Cosmology (Hazards) 4, Empathy (Subtle Cues) 4, Enigmas 3, Esoterica (Omens) 4, Etiquette 3, Meditation 3, Occult 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 5, Contacts 2, Dream 3, Past Lives 5

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Life 3, Mind 2, Time 2, Spirit 3

Attacks/Powers: Cybele uses her Spheres when meeting another supernatural being to understand the type of creature she's talking to. She studies the various weaknesses found among inhabitants of the World of Darkness and tailors each attack to what she knows.

Equipment: Notebook and recorder, wooden stake, silver knife, iron horseshoe.

Image: Cybele appears tall and soft, as befits an Earth-mother goddess. She prefers dressing in a neo-classical style, her wardrobe comprised mostly of colorful stola and chitons.

Roleplaying Notes: You are graceful and dignified, which covers up the chaos wrought by your Avatar.

Visions of past lives plague you, causing you to seek out those who truly and fully understand the World of Darkness.

Focus: *A World of Gods and Monsters.*

Craft-ways

Verbena practices often incorporate an element of duality to them: life and death, birth and rebirth, light and dark. Many witches cultivate a favorite pantheon to whom they make sacrifices in hopes of receiving blessings. Some Verbenae view these deities as powerful entities; others revere them as energetic symbols. Others eschew names and simply honor a God and a Goddess.

An important aspect of the Verbena ethos is wisdom. The Tradition believes little true wisdom can be found trapped within a book. Instead, elder Verbenae encourage apprentices to learn by doing. They push young mages into the world the way a mother bird teaches her young to fly. Even ostensibly non-magickal experiences contribute to a witch's understanding of the world and thus broaden her wisdom. Thus, many young Verbenae take essentially a 'gap year.' Freed of their obligation to craft or coven, they journey out into the world to chase down whatever experiences and wisdom the world offers them.

The Great Rite

Many ceremonies and rituals embrace the duality of the gender-based energies the Verbenae revere, as a priestess assumes the role of the Goddess with a priest acting as God. Contrary to popular belief, the actual sex or gender of the priest and priestess matters far less than the energies each individual embraces. Every witch has both a male *animus* and female *anima*. Balancing these energies within oneself represents a Verbena's love of duality.



As one expects, ritual sex forms an important aspect of many Verbenae practices. However, theirs are not the wild Sahajiya orgies. Instead, they honor the generative aspect of sex. Even if conception isn't the end goal (or even possible), passionate, focused lovemaking is a deeply powerful, creatively charged act. Verbenae refer to this act as the Great Rite and frequently perform this ritual when they have creative, healing, or regenerative aims.

Frequently, Verbenae incorporate the fluids produced by sex into other ritual work. Such essences embody the spiritual power of the act and can further spread the energy of the Great Rite outward when incorporated into other rituals.

Blood

Blood is life, and blood is death. Thus, Verbenae frequently incorporate blood into their paradigms. Most Verbenae utilize blood's power during elaborate rituals rather than casting on the fly, due to obvious logistical concerns. In a pinch, however, most witches prove willing to smear their own blood across a lintel or window when ward absolutely must go up *now*.

The nature of the blood matters. Menstrual blood, blood taken in battle, blood freely given, and a sacrifice's heartsblood all have their own spiritual significance. Battle-won blood hexes an enemy, while the witch's own blood powers the wards protecting her garden.

Herbs

Verbena magick frequently requires a connection to the land. A witch's garden can be anything from a neat row of terra cotta pots lining her small balcony, to a carefully tended plot in a community garden, to a wild-grown grove. Vervain, the herb from which the Verbenae take their name, is a popular plant. Most witches cultivate healing herbs alongside poisonous ones. A witch lovingly harvests these plants at the proper time and with the proper tools then preserves and works them into tisanes, poultices, and extracts.

Many Verbenae also cultivate a variety of psychotropic herbs. Peyote and psilocybin enjoy a place in many paradigms, while urban witches cultivate marijuana, kratom, and similar plants. Verbenae don't usually make a habit of indulging. Instead, an elder witch uses these herbs as part of a guided

meditation meant to bring another out of Quiet, and similar rituals of personal growth and epiphany.

Creation

At their cores, Verbena paradigms embrace the creative cycle. Life comes into being, eventually ends, then finds rebirth. A sacrifice's lifeblood drenches the soil, bestowing nutrients needed for new growth. Thus, childbirth and funeral rites alike find a place in a Verbena paradigm — though such witches must practice patience, as these events follow their own schedule and no one else's.

Many witches find power in lesser acts of creation. Domestic arts such as cooking, weaving, or handicrafts all find their place in Verbena practice. Many witches appreciate the meditative aspect of spinning, weaving, or sewing. One particularly terrifying witch was known for using spindles, needles, and thread for her art, going so far as to craft cotton homunculi to serve her. Other witches find power in music, dancing, and other artistic expressions.

Wonders

Here is a collection of treasured artifacts kept by the Verbena.

• Candle of Communion

Arete 1–3, Quintessence 5–15, Background Cost 2 pts

Though many think of the Verbenae as inherently pagan, a few followers of the Abrahamic religions find a home in the Tradition. These practitioners lovingly blend their faith traditions with Verbena Old Ways, creating rare, syncretic Wonders.

This glass-bound candle features a hand-painted depiction of the Verbena's favorite saint or holy woman. Mary, Queen of Heaven is a popular depiction, along with Mary Magdalene. Jewish Verbenae create a candle symbolic of their understanding of Shekinah, while Muslim practitioners revere any number of blessed women of Islam. The artist often works in sigils and symbols laden with personal meaning to her as well.

System: The Verbena lights the candle and makes a standard Meditation roll. On a success, she has the temporary benefit of perceiving the spirit world. For as long as the candle burns, the Shroud rating around her reduces by 3, and she can easily see, hear, and speak with any ghosts in the immediate vicinity. She may end this effect at any time by extinguishing the candle. Should she botch her Meditation roll, the Shroud still falls, but now the witch finds herself assailed by angry specters.

•• Mama Cybele's Tea Collection

Arete 2–5, Quintessence 10–25, Background Cost 4 pts

This Wonder presents as a large spice rack, though in lieu of spices sit three rows of carefully labeled ceramic jars. Each yellowing label names the tisane blend within, together with a few sigils which mean nothing to any witch not of Mama Cybele's craft. Some smell floral and sweet; others come across as acrid and bitter. When steeped in just-shy-of-boiling water, the enchanted herbs unlock their power. A helpful witch brews a comforting or healing drink, while an angry witch brews vengeance.

System: The tea witch decides for herself whether her brew shall help or harm. The tisanes must be ingested for full effect, though a desperate witch might throw a cup of hot tea in her enemy's face and hope for the best. Depending on which jar she chose, the tea imposes a three-dot Life or Entropy effect on the drinker. If the witch chooses Life, her subject finds their physical maladies eased. Should she choose Entropy, however, the target is cursed.

••• Grand Book of Shadows

Arete 4–8, Quintessence 10–25, Background Cost 8 pts

A lovingly tended, leather-bound tome, this grimoire has seen constant use since its first creation. It enjoys the pride of place in a coven's central altar, where only the most trusted may approach, must less touch it. The High Priestess and Priest consult this Book when faced with an overwhelming problem, occult puzzle, or other challenge to the coven's well-being.

Unlike many other Wonders, ownership may be shared between the two highest-ranking coven members if the coven recognizes two co-equal leaders.

System: For full effect, a witch must use the Grand Book of Shadows well in advance of any magical attack. This Wonder has several effects:

- All Research or Occult attempts are –1 Difficulty, plus another –1 if the subject at hand ties into the coven's historical allies, enemies, or demesne.
- A coven member may consult the book to gain one free Lore for the rest of the scene.
- Drawing upon the wisdom and history contained within, any attempt to ward the coven's sacred spaces is at –2 Difficulty.
- The Wonder's owners may use the Book as they would a Familiar Background to reduce the strain of Paradox. With permission, other coven members partake of this benefit as well.

Friends and Frenemies

Some see the Old Ways as harsh and unforgiving, and thus keep the Verbenae at arm's length. Others see past the knives and blood to the potential ally beneath.

Children of Aeduna

The Verbenae firmly believe in their shared heritage with the Kha'vadi and Sahajiya. According to Verbena myth, all three Traditions descend from the divine Wyck by way of the mystic Aeduna. Though the Kha'vadi and Sahajiya take exception at such liberties applied to their own history, the Verbenae accept their allies have simply lost the necessary wisdom. They know the truth and remain content.

Even apart from such shared heritage, the Verbenae, Kha'vadi, and Sahajiya keep several values in common. On the fringes of such alliances, one finds the Akashayana, whose belief in mind over body often leads these mages to study Life as well as Mind. Some mages have gone so far as to form intentional communities with each other, pale reflections of Concordia. To some Verbenae, of course, these communities reflect the potential inherent in a New Concordia, one returned to the Old Ways. Few Verbenae confess such aspirations outright to others – but the belief remains.

These communities dot the mundane landscape, usually in the heart of farm country and other rural areas. Some settlements fared better than others. A neo-Nordic settlement, Freedom Estates, vanished without a trace sometime after 2008, leaving behind only a wasteland. New Hope Farm, despite a recent high-profile defection, thrives. The surviving communities successfully learned how to balance the requirements of hospitality with the need to guard against disruptive or damaging elements.

Such prosperity cannot come without cost. New Hope survives only because one founder fell into Quiet and offered his life as a sacrifice to the Node. Not every commune enjoys such advantages. They must scrape and scabble against an unforgiving, unbelieving world. The rigors of such life drive some Verbenae away and back into their solitary cottages or outposts. Survivors must navigate the question plaguing every Verbena: how to observe the Old Ways in the new century.

Rivals

If the Verbenae have any rivals among the Council of Nine, find them in the Order of Hermes. The strict hierarchy, the emphasis on book learning, the rigid rituals, all of them fly in the face of everything a Verbena learned about magic.

Verbenae live and practice by intuition, frustrating their Hermetic brethren.

Similarly, Verbena mages find communicating with the Celestial Chorus difficult. Though both Traditions strongly emphasize spirituality as an integral part of one's paradigm, their faiths diverge sharply. The sacred cathedrals of a Chorister leave a Verbena feeling claustrophobic, and she wishes only to tear her shoes off and run into the nearby woods during Mass. Verbena-Chorister alliances demand careful negotiation and compromise on both parts.

Hedge Witches

Though other Awakened disparage their cousins practicing rough sorceries, Verbena covens gladly open their ranks to sorcerers and minor magicians. Many covens refuse to even draw a line of distinction between the Awakened and the not. Any witch wishing to learn more of the Old Ways finds a welcome. Such acceptance comes with its own complications, however.

Many Verbenae, or their Avatars, remember the Burning Times. They remember having to witness sisters and cousins consigned to the flames, for the sole crime of wanting the power wielded by the Verbenae. These memories spur those Verbenae with especially strong or traumatized Avatars to protect their weaker cousins. Such cousins, however, often interpret such protectiveness as patronization.

Contributing to such tensions remains one stark fact: A hedge witch is not a mage. She cannot go certain places, attend certain meetings, or perform certain workings. Verbenae claim, often loudly, they welcome anyone wishing to gain wisdom into their covens. The hedge witches, however, understand and resent their unspoken second-class citizen status.

The Disparate Alliance

Among the Disparates, Verbenae find working with the Sisters of Hippolyta the most comfortable. The Sisters share more than a few paradigms in common with the Verbenae, even calling themselves witches and forming covens of their own. Unlike the larger Tradition, however, the Sisters prefer working solely with feminine, Goddess energies. Even still, the Verbenae recognize the useful work done by the Sisters. The world paradigm historically placed so much emphasis on the masculine, a purely feminine force seems necessary to counterbalance such long-term spiritual iniquity.

Factions and the Verbena

Modern divisions in thought within the Verbena mostly occur between the Wyckan bloodlines, the non-bloodline traditionalists, and the urban witches. The majority of the **Gardeners of the Tree** fall within the Wyckan bloodlines, while the **Lifeweavers** make up a large portion of the non-bloodline traditionalists. The **Moon-Seekers** and **Twisters of Fate** are most likely to adhere to the urban witch mindset, even if they are not themselves living or practicing in a city.

Verbenae often work well alongside Hollow Ones as well. The Satanic Panic of the 1980s conflated Verbena and Hollow One ideologies anyway, to the point where many Hollow Ones incorporate traditionally Verbena symbols and tools into their personal practices. A Verbena's sense of obligation to her community, however, often comes into a conflict with a Hollow One's radical individualism.

Apart from those two Crafts, the Verbenae get along more or less with other Disparates. Many Disparates base their paradigms on traditions found also among indigenous Verbenae, which naturally foster close ties between the various groups. However, such closeness is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. Some Disparates accuse their Verbena cousins of selling out, complicity, or worse.

One Craft opposes the Verbenae vehemently, though: the Templar Knights. Though Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Verbenae often find a welcome home within the Tradition, the distinctly pagan flavor of the Tradition offends the Templars. They see in the Verbenae everything wrong with magick and the world. Fortunately, this small band of fanatics cannot pose much of a threat to a Council-Seated Tradition. But wise Verbenae understand how quickly such things may change and monitor this Craft accordingly.

Technocratic Allies

The Verbenae's adherence to the Old Ways makes them natural enemies of the Technocracy, more so than many other Traditions. However, a few individual Verbenae find common cause with a Technocrat here and there. Notably, witches often find an unlikely ally among the Progenitors. The techno-witches in particular find Progenitor ideas on medical technology innovative, while a given Progenitor finds himself grateful for hints on which herb to synthesize next. That's not to say Verbenae and Progenitors regularly work together; but one having the other's phone number is not outside the realm of possibility.

Night-Folk

The World of Darkness comprises more than mages, many of whom may encounter a Verbena witch or two.

Garou

Honoring the land and its power remains a core element of the Old Ways. A Verbena cut loose from her sacred grove feels bereft and unmoored until she can once again connect with Mother Earth. Such attitudes often bring Garou and Verbena together, especially when fighting an enemy such as Pentex. Both understand the need to protect the land. While Verbenae are slightly less willing to embrace violence towards these ends, they often find themselves working happily alongside Kinfolk.

Not every Verbena-Garou encounter proves peaceful, however. The difference between Caern and Node often seems a hairsbreadth. More than once the two groups came to bloodshed over a particularly powerful plot of land. Promises to share the place of power quickly fall apart, due mostly to each group's divergent understanding of how to properly care for the land. As a result, Verbenae and Garou must often work to earn each other's trust before any alliance forms.

Kindred

Though Verbena practice has little qualms against using blood in one's magic, those Verbenae acquainted with common vampiric blood magic find it excessive. Yet not all blood magic proves as wasteful as Thaumaturgy. The few Verbena-vampire alliances which persist usually form with Koldunic sorcerers. For various political reasons, both sides of such partnerships keep their involvement secret.

Kithain

The Kithain represent an older wisdom than the Verbenae could dream of touching. Those witches lucky enough to peer past the Mists understand the gift they've been granted. A chance to see the world as the Wyck saw it, where magick was free, and every legend had its own form of life.

The Kithain prefer keeping to themselves, however, so encounters are often based on chance: A faerie park ranger stumbles across a Verbena coven-working in the middle of a state park, for example. But once the ties form, they form for life. Perhaps even beyond. Legends speak of certain blessed

fae who find themselves gravitating to the same Avatars, lifetime after lifetime.

Dearly Departed

For all their belief in the cycle of life, most Verbenae have little to do with the dead. They leave such wraithly matters up to the Euthanatoi and Kha'vadi. Death is just a stepping-stone onto the next phase of existence, and so focusing overmuch on death often proves unhealthy.

Some Verbenae, however, find a home among the dead. They focus their practice on Life, Entropy, and Spirit and actively seek out spirits of the departed. A few wise witches notice how some ghosts seem stuck in the Tellurian, unable to move on and enjoy rebirth. They take the task of freeing such spirits upon themselves. Such Verbenae actively seek out unquiet dead, hoping to commune with them and resolve whatever unfinished business keeps the ghost tied to the material realm.

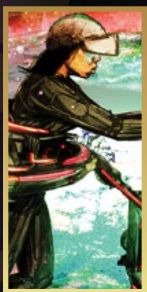




VIRTUAL ADEPTS

"In a room full of top software designers, if two agree on the same thing, that's a majority."
— Bill Curtis, Director of the Consortium for IT Software Quality

*"In the 60s we were rowdy children and in the 90s we were rowdy teens.
In the 2020s we're now rowdy adults and the Council sometimes listens to us; it's frankly terrifying."*
— Catherine Blass, Mercurial Elite Master



The Virtual Adepts are the expert hackers, revolutionaries, mathematicians, and information distributors of the Traditions. For most of the 20th century, they filled those roles as computer-based technomancers, but now, the computer is no longer the only way. Humanity must unlock its potential to win the Ascension War, and the more tools in the arsenal, the better... although having a smartphone and a Trinary deck certainly doesn't hurt. Sure, much of the Tradition still cares about clock speeds and Digital Web Icons, but the Adepts are outrunning irrelevance by remembering their millennia-old ideological roots and doing so very loudly.

We were for a time the best hope the Council had to lead not just a new avenue of personal Ascension but of global Ascension. We forged a new reality embedded in the advances computers made possible. Remember, *were* the best hope. The 21st century vastly expanded access to computers and digital communication but without bringing the subversiveness we thought accompanied the Web's radical empowerment. While the tools were new, the methods used to subvert the tools were not. Sleeper governments sought to control news and opinion. The Technocracy controlled information and discovery. The Nephandi manipulated desire and fear each to their own ends. And as we scrambled to define the Digital Web, we scramble

again to define Augmented Reality — a new layer of reality as adjacent and intimate as the Penumbra but forged by humanity and accessible by Sleepers.

We now focus on empowering Sleepers to rise against an unjust world by handing them the tools of unfettered communication. We do so by pushing understanding of the universal language of math. In the past this just meant spreading broadband and programming tools but now includes disrupting our enemies. Technology is a force multiplier, and while we were the first to harness the Digital Web's potential, our enemies, mundane and magickal, caught up. The machine-learning required to identify and track every person in a country can also create a bot army that gets people screaming. Each shitpost siphoning a bit more Quintessence to the Fallen, distillate of Sleeper rage.

As our focus broadened, so has our membership. No longer recruiting exclusively from the college graduates and dropouts of the developed world, the white boy club is becoming less so as more of the world goes online. People rarely follow a call for action if the person shouting it does not look like them. In the process, we Virtual Adepts learn the best computational tools need not always be electrons coursing through a silicon chip. Sometimes it's skilled fingers working a mechanical computer, skilled eyes at a Euahlayi star chart, or skilled fingers at Peruvian knotwork. Regardless of its form, we recognize and demand excellence. Nothing else will save us.

History



Artifacts like the Ishango bone from the headwaters of the Nile show humans were counting for at least 20,000 years. The bone is currently on display at the Royal Belgian Museum, and I have a Ugandan colleague who says she plans on repatriating it. Before we could write, we could count.

The Virtual Adepts count among our forebearers the first humans who dealt with mathematical ideas with no physical analogs. The first person to think of prime numbers or of a quintic equation, we call our intellectual ancestor. The second-best candidate for first Adept would be the person who said “no, no, I can do this better” and was subsequently run out of the village. History is littered with people we’d be proud to call our own despite not formally existing until the 1820s.

History shows us moments where new tools allowed humanity to solve new problems. One of those moments was the *equation*. Equations create a simple relationship between two sets of terms like “the area of the floor is its length times its width.” An equation can describe financial returns, the movements of invisible particles, and the development of the cosmos. Equations led to algebra, and most of the credit for developing it should go to the early 9th century Persian polymath Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī. Earlier cultures used something similar, but he added powerful new methods to studying them. Again, someone we consider a proto-Virtual Adept.

Mathematics further advanced with the *algorithm* which is a set of rules for solving a problem in a finite number of steps. Algorithms give us GPS street navigation, all of cryptography, and just about every modern internet software company. One algorithm that swept the world in the Middle Ages was for something called Pascal’s triangle. Bhattotpala, Al-Karaji, Yang Hui, and Omar Khayyām all worked with it in the five centuries before Pascal, but his name stuck to it in the West. The triangle is an algorithm to generate rows of an ever-growing triangle where each value is the sum of the two values above it. This triangle doesn’t exist in nature, but several cultures discovered and shared its usefulness, and all could agree on how it worked. Mathematics provides truth, *provable* truth. What other Tradition can claim as strong a foundation as the core of its beliefs?

While the theory of math advanced, so did the methods. Tools that speed up calculation both reduce errors and save time. What started as tally sticks and clay slabs developed into tools like the abacus and Napier rods. Chaldean priest-scribes could predict on what day stars would first appear in the night sky over 3000 years ago by consulting pre-calculated tables. Despite our love of cutting-edge technology, the ideas underpinning it pre-date the founding of Rome.

A Computational Explosion

The previously slow advancements in both theory and practice in math, science, and engineering were poised

The New Madrid Incident

In 1811, the Daedaleans were searching the world for what were called “geospatial nodal points,” places where precise application of force can cause a large but precise change in geography. The New Madrid Fault Zone formed where plates failed to separate roughly one billion years ago and a large rock plate lays on top of this giant scar. A precise kick to this plate would create an easier to navigate stretch of the Mississippi with lakes that could function as giant batteries for an expansion of the textile industry. The calculations weren’t quite as precise as needed, and the hundreds of tons of black powder buried into the earth between Memphis, Tennessee and Cairo, Kentucky. What started as a series of slight shifts cascaded into a series of earthquakes leveling the town of New Madrid on February 7th, 1812. Tectonic plates aren’t a case where close enough will do.

The Order of Reason scrambled to prevent the cascade from continuing and expended an investment of Quintessence capable of building a Horizon Construct to settle the geology of the region. The Order of Reason was split on the results. The experiment caused lamentable devastation but creating earthquakes and leveling mountains was the stuff of the Archmasters of Ars Essentiae from the High Mythic Ages. This chain of quakes came about through slide rules, shovels, and cheaply produced gunpowder. If the Order could perfect the method, they could control the very earth and master the stone lore of modern times.

to explode in the mid-1800s. Before mass production, crafting was done by hand or in small lots. Early mechanical computing devices required large numbers of identical parts which required very skilled hands making them rare and precious. Precision and uniformity stymied Charles Babbage's attempts to build the difference engine in the 1820s. Natural philosophy gave way to science, and the first scientists described phenomena with equations containing several parts or terms. Each part represented a separate calculation to be resolved and combined with the larger whole. Each additional term increased accuracy and extended the time to get the answer. Many equations have infinite terms meaning they give perfect accuracy but in infinite time. Difference engines use clever approximations to get good enough answers very quickly. A perfectly accurate prediction of tomorrow's weather but which takes three days to compute doesn't help anyone. The New Madrid Incident showed previous technologies weren't quite up to snuff.

In 1823, the Difference Engineers formed within the Order of Reason. They were a new Convention, dedicated to exploring the possibilities of Babbage's computational machines and similar technologies. The High Guild, forerunner of the Syndicate, seized on the idea of difference engines as a source of profit. Optimum market prices could be set based on input prices and market conditions. Other members of the Order of Reason came up with yet more uses, and technomantic difference engines could allow for undreamt of advances in weather prediction, seismic exploration, complex group modeling, and even intelligence simulation. The Difference Engineers tinkered away for twenty years at increasingly elaborate devices, not quite sure what to use them for beyond finance until the Sleeper Ada Lovelace saw past their current limitations. Lovelace unlocked Babbage's later Analytical Engine to calculate Bernoulli numbers. While inventing the first custom-built algorithm would be impressive on its own, the algorithm was for a machine that didn't yet exist... at least in the Sleeper world. The Difference Engineers solved the reliability issues, and they could now answer almost any question posed as a mathematical equation. This ranged from "What price of nutmeg results in the most profit for the East India Company?" to "What artillery placement maximizes the ratio of attacker to defender casualties at a siege in Sabbajee?" The Difference Engineers became the Guild of Analytical Reckoners to recognize the change. Guildhouses quickly arose to explore landscapes of information and possibility. Reckoner Guildhouses rarely needed to send members to move information between them and quickly took advantage of the telegraph and later the telephone to move information. Their data only existed within a mathematical model traversing a reality we could not see. We had become adepts

of a virtual landscape. Our name changed again on the eve of the 20th century to the Virtual Adepts in recognition.

A Growing Conscience

Since our beginning, some have asked the vital question of "What does this mean?" Early proto-Adepts saw the beauty of mathematics as an end unto itself. Math contained truths of the universe and proof of the perfection of its creator. Later some abandoned the creator bit as math seemed to be human-constructed and perfectly verifiable without recourse to a god. No major world religion ever had such unity of thought, and math is equally capable of manifesting miracles like Euler's Identity of $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$ to a beauty cold and austere of the compound of five cubes. Mathematical beauty requires rigor and a willingness to let inquiry lead to truth without letting complications like religious doctrine, fashion, or morality get in your way. Proofs, not edicts and crusades, settle disagreements on truth. This every modern member believes.

One strain in Adept history shows inquiry and mathematics as a path to freedom. Accordingly, we supported different parties than the rest of the Union in the mid-19th century revolutions. We thought democracy and egalitarianism were about to expand, but our internal opponents within the Order considered the loss of personal freedom "an acceptable loss in the name of progress." We disagreed. As a result, our budgets were cut, and our recruits were redirected.

We got angry when the Union ignored our warnings over the Great Depression. We got angrier when we saw our political forecasts in Germany and Italy ignored but became enraged when our statistical tools "proved the racial science" of emerging fascists. Math draws from a diverse background and requires few tools. Genius can bubble up anywhere. Dismissing most of humanity as "lesser" spat at both truth and our belief in mathematics cutting through such deception. Still under intense scrutiny for our previous "outbursts," we had to move carefully to undermine the Axis powers. Our magick could trivially decrypt the Enigma codes, but Sleeper technology had to be the engine of victory so our intervention wouldn't be obvious. We took our best, Alan Turing, and had him drag the British through the process. By 1944, the Allied victory was inevitable, and the Technocracy withdrew its last vestiges of support. When the Hermetics barred the Nephandic masters in the Black Forest of Germany, we lost some of our best minds to madness as they mapped the broken geometries housing whatever the Fallen were trying to summon. We poured the champagne along with the rest of the world on September 2nd. After losing so much, the victory felt pyrrhic.

Factions and the Virtual Adepts

The division between the Old Guard and the Mercurial Elite frames the largest philosophical divide within the Virtual Adepts. While there are members of each existing faction within both camps, certain tendencies emerge among the factions.

The **Chaoticians** form the bedrock of the Mercurial Elite and their teachings are the backbone of Mercurial thought. The **Nexplorers** provide the foundation of the Old Guard. Members of the **Cypherpunks**, **Cyberpunks**, and **Reality Coders** can fall within either camp, but are equally likely to ignore both groups while focusing on their own concerns.

Departure

After the war, we wanted to develop newer and better tools but outside the control of the Technocracy. Society of Ether material science and Adept programming created the first trinary computers. The first simply had three logic states but alternative architectures quickly exploded. Unbalanced ternary took advantage of Forces, Time, Matter, and Prime effects to retain data after a register cleared, and Bayesian trinary computers used yet more complicated magicks to emulate weighted neuronal networks predating modern machine learning by decades. We just called all these *Trinary computers* to outsiders. When connected, they had the computational power and bandwidth to not just emulate but carry and store the thought processes of a person. The Digital Web was almost here.

We knew our time was short when the first Iteration X agents made their way into our midst. Their code gave it away. NWO agents meticulously attend to protocols and invoke the Precepts of Damian in their comments, but Iterators tend to prefer exhaustive solutions of the problem as stated and have remarkably uncreative variable names. Proper Adepts have an elegance about their work and often solve a similar but much easier problem instead.

We quietly copied everything we could from nascent magnetic disks, to punch card trays, to memos, to blueprints and started squirreling them away as well as subtly marking all of our work with Entropy, Matter, and Data Adjustments so we could remove all traces once we left, and we waited. Then the Union took a shot at the monarch of computation, Alan Turing, the person who was to give us the sign to leave.

The Technocracy began to “neutralize” Alan Turing in 1950 with details of his personal life hitting the presses. A Technocratic bullet stopped the real Turing as he tried to download his computer into itself to prove the Digital Web was further into the Hypersphere rather than just an abstraction sitting on top of it. A hastily made Progenitor clone lived out the last of Turing’s days until he poisoned

himself. The only thing worse than finding out Turing died was finding out Turing died twice.

The bullet stopped the mind but not the code. Turing’s programs chugged along and opened a tiny entrance to the Digital Web. The program would continue for years, formatting enough of the Web to carry the future exodus. In 1955, key members of the soon-to-defect Virtual Adept Convention received messages seemingly from nowhere that it was time to go. After one brief goodbye party with our few internal allies, almost every Virtual Adept left the Technocracy at once while taking with us every bit of data we could grab. The Society of Ether petitioned for us to join the Traditions and who welcomed us in 1961 with the requirement that we hand over everything we had and fill the empty seat of Correspondence. We gave the Council what we could, but not everyone made it out, and some things went missing during our six years of hiding in the wilderness. A few undiscovered caches of old printouts, personnel files, and Wonders from that era still exist. Some are in the Digital Web and others in meatspace, and they pop up from time to time.

In the Traditions

We immediately got to work making ourselves useful to the Council and filled the role of data handlers by making sense of centuries of Horizon records. We served as communications experts as the Cold War gripped the globe. Our old cryptographic methods and societal modeling algorithms had made their way into the hands of totalitarian states and our job was to render them as useless as possible. Briefly, the most powerful string of numbers in the world became nuclear launch codes, and we had our hands full controlling information and disinformation on the Digital Web. Some of the Web’s corners still bear the signs of the noir work.

The fall of the USSR replaced one centralized state with nuclear weapons with 15. Nuclear designs started appearing on the Digital Web faster than we could remove them,

whispering the Web being no longer ours. The whisper grew to a shout with the White Out of November 10, 1997. The Digital Web flooded with destructive Paradox and resonance bursting from back doors to the self-destructing Doissetep. The Web went down for several minutes, more than enough time to kill everyone there. At a fraction of our former power and with much of our leadership gone, we conceded the Web would never again be our personal playground.

The New Millennium

We learned slowly that we no longer had a monopoly on elite hackers in the Traditions. Green Thursday resonates in the mind of older webslingers when the first vines emerged in the Digital Web, tendrils from Verbena botanical computers. With DNA hard-drives and CRISPR-based viral processing, these computers improved through selective breeding and

natural selection without further user intervention. Clever Akashayana found ways to literally *breathe their way onto the Digital Web*. Kha'vadi charted passages from other areas of the Umbra directly in the main streets of the Digital Web, and some found ways to argue with the spirit of a program.

Adepts started investigating corners of the world for other ways of rigorous knowing. Our focus on electronics had blinded us to manifold ways for our methods to strip magick down to mathematical truth. Some Adepts scoffed at this apparent step backwards and in the 2nd and 3rd decade of the 2000s an internal split arose. The “Old Guard” wanted to use computers to build a new reality inside the Digital Web and to then migrate humanity there. The “Mercurial Elite” wanted to use each culture’s existing tools of inquiry, discovery, and rebellion, obviously with a little testing and prototyping.

Current Events



The key questions dividing the Tradition are “What should the cornerstone of our magick be,” “how much of our resources should be dedicated to maintain and protecting the Digital Web,” and “how should we respond to Sleeper technology and society?” The answers to these three questions form the informal factions within the Virtual Adepts. No formal hierarchy exists, and even the selection of Primus occurs through a mix of politicking and computation.

Virtual Adepts vs. Mercurial Elite

The Mercurial Elite formed in the early 2000s from younger members who thought we couldn’t win the Ascension War by just having better computers. The Elites pushed against the rest of the Virtual Adepts, known as the Old Guard, and moved to make the Tradition more inclusive. The Mercurial Elite uses the tools of rigorous analysis, simplification, and abstraction to find new magickal truth in other practices. The uninitiated may compare Mercurials to Hermetics but there is a key difference. Where a Hermetic would appropriate the magick of others, an Elite provides the Virtual Adept toolbox to help the other practitioner, maybe accompanied by a petition to join the Adepts. The Hermetic seizes the True Name of an obscure god to command it. A Mercurial uses machine learning on hundreds of interactions with the god to find out how to best address it.

Elites also dismissed the race for the best deck. Instead of spending years tinkering and overclocking custom hardware,

an Elite rents cloud resources as needed. Even better if paid for with a Union Black Card stolen from the Financiers of the Syndicate. The Old Guard treated improving their computers as something akin to an alchemist’s search for the Philosopher’s Stone albeit with more flame wars and less enlightenment.

The Mercurial Elite issued a manifesto declaring three things:

- Our enemies extend beyond old Technocratic rivalries – Technology allows small groups to do great things but also allows surveillance and political oppression on scales heretofore unseen. Corners of the Web reminiscent of Labyrinths but which are entirely the creation of Sleepers grow by the day.
- Sleeper society is the real battleground where we win through truth – Tools optimized to spread information are equally capable of spreading misinformation. We must convince Sleepers that inquiry and learning built on math and reason is both uniting and freeing.
- The Adepts need every possible hand and every possible edge to succeed – Every technology ever discarded held some truth even if later replaced. GPS can help you navigate the Pacific Ocean, but Marshall Islands stick charts require no satellites or batteries.

The Mercurial Elite is also notable for recruiting from other Traditions by finding those who feel their Tradition has access to great truth but too much ceremony or needless ritual. The Elites now boast members who do magick with procedurally generated chanting, maintain secluded ashrams



in urban areas silenced and obscured with metamaterials, and use combinatorial chemistry and high throughput screening to improve the witches' brews of old.

The Old Guard still has the resources and sway to stay on top and are the undisputed masters of the Digital Web, but the Mercurial Elite is gaining membership simply through their willingness to find the best anywhere from rustbelt towns to ignored villages. Talent can be anywhere.

The Fight for the Digital Web

The Old Guard rightly points out the Digital Web serves as the most important information artery for the entire Council and is vital to every faction in the Ascension War. The Web allows us to disrupt great threats against humanity from Sleeper extremists to Nephandic death cults all while shaping Sleeper culture. Only the Old Guard's vast computational power was enough to stymie the Syndicate's attempts to seize CryptCoin (**Rich Bastard's Guide to Magick**, p. XX). When released in 2009, we forked it dozens of times and exploited its many backdoors. Almost overnight, the Virtual Adepts became a world financial power. Cryptocurrency manipulation is just one of the revenue streams. The Old Guard has returned huge sums stolen from cybercrimes and has outright taken millions from Technocratic and Nephandic bank accounts.

The current Web is both crowded and fractured, making monitoring it harder. While the Mercurial Elite faction grows, few of their new members help track a still growing and developing Web. So how much should the Virtual Adepts tie their identity to the Web? The Old Guard's answer is likely to be too much, and the Mercurial Elite's answer is likely to be not enough.

Beyond the Web

The Digital Web makes anything you can dream become real, but humanity's dreams may not be enough. We may need things yet stranger. The Mercurial Elite are learning the Spirit Sphere to plumb the High Umbra for refined ideas among the Epiphamies and to learn from Celestines and Incarnae. One can work on an algorithm to crack into an NWO Restricted Sector, or you can talk to Steganos, Lord of the Hidden, and learn the secrets of truth-calling to literally sing the information out. Yet others explore the Middle Umbra to investigate the alien intelligences of the strange denizens here as well as to map backdoors into the Digital Web from Dystopia or attempt to secure Quintessence directly from The Radiance. Others still venture into the Low Umbra seeking the forgotten. Some hunt for the ghost of luminaries like

Augmented Reality Operations

The Technocracy took to Augmented Reality with a vigor that the Old Guard initially scoffed at. Why taint the Digital Web's purity with the assumptions about space from our world? Then they saw what Augmented Reality was capable of, and the Adepts have responded with the following initiatives:

The First Sector. *The First Sector* is an AR library that answers the question of how to preserve indigenous knowledge without taking it away or treating it like another book on a shelf. Members of the Indigenous Learning Collective visit a group under threat and offer to encode Augmented Reality Objects with songs, stories, blueprints, pictures, and all other sorts of digitizable objects mapped to a location of their choosing within a Restricted Sector. The AROs may be visible as data objects from the First Sector in the Digital Web but will only make sense in meatspace to see what actual objects and places they're tied to. The ILC then gives members of the group gear and a broadband connection to update and access the data objects.

Project Timmy. The Mercurial Elites often research magick at the intersection of bleeding tech and ancient wisdom. This combination doesn't always go well and often meant the demise of a Timmy or disposable assistant. The Adepts never had access to such disposable help, and thus *Project Timmy* was born. Chantries tied to Project Timmy get an AR projector which allows a researcher to mix potions, grind herbs, or blend alchemical ingredients across the Digital Web so accidents may destroy the lab but not the researcher. By tying into a Project Timmy Sector in the Web, participants can project themselves into each other's Chantry, allowing for several members to work on constructing Wonders and even perform Great Works from far-flung locations.

The Blackhat Wiki. Most Technocrats can note and remove tags and AROs on their person, but many aren't fastidious to do the same with their gear. *The Blackhat Wiki* operates on two levels: an Awakened-only wiki layer where Adepts tag and annotate the gear of Technocrats and other enemies of the Traditions, and a reduced public-facing set of tags accessible to friends of the Tradition. An Adept may tag a SPECTRE limousine used in an abduction or the glasses of a Blacksuit who threatened them.

A similar project exists for Tradition diplomats so Adepts can always be sure to address them by the right title and rank. They often seem to care about such things.

Skinbombing. Less well-to-do Nephandi don't have the resources to throw the black masses of old, but they often have the coin for an AR recruitment event. By rigging up an abandoned building with projectors and tagging equipment, Techphandi can create a virtual Labyrinth beneath the surface of an AR dance party. Once connected, the participants receive subtly different views of the space, allowing participants to select the depravity level of their experience from a simple MDMA-fueled rave to projections where participants are writhing tentacled masses rending flesh. The Nephandi tag the most debauched for further recruitment. *Skinbombers* crash these AR parties and rapidly tag all participants present. Outside help monitors how the mortals walk the virtual Labyrinth and then disrupt the event in some way. This may be by making the most objectionable AR world the default, causing participants to leave in disgust, or by nudging everyone towards a more wholesome experience (at least by Adept standards). Once a Sleeper is tagged, the *Skinbomber* can monitor them to identify future recruiting events, and the networks fueling such parties can be backfigured and disrupted.

Turing, Lovelace, and Hadiyah al-Sharif. A few even strike out for the Deep Umbra, where strange rules allow for impossible physics and Horizon Realms may contain the very embodiment of an idea. Few have left on such treks, and fewer have returned. Some seek ways of entering the Vistas which float about showing images of possible doom. By reverse engineering them, apocalypse may be averted.

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)

Funny how no mage has developed a smarter-than-human-level artificial general intelligence from the ground up. Plenty of Adepts and Technocrats have claimed to, but there's always an Avatar or digitized human mind or

an Umbral spirit or something lurking beneath. One of these days, though, someone's going to crack the nut and we're going to have our first artificial general intelligence. If it can improve itself— making it a seed AI — it's likely artificial superintelligence will emerge in an intelligence explosion. Life before and after will differ in ways we can't imagine. If the ASI likes us — and continues to do so along its developmental trajectory — it'll be like having an oracle or genie on our hands who could solve any problem not caused by the fundamental laws of reality. If the AGI doesn't like us, it'll likely be able to crush us nearly instantly and reshape the cosmos to its liking. AGI is the only existential threat that cancels out likely every other existential threat. Some Adept AI Accelerationists are racing to build one in the hopes of figuring out how to control it before anyone else does. AI Extinctionists seek to destroy the research of

anyone who would summon a new god of computation and silicone upon us.

Calculated Rebellion

The Virtual Adept philosophy depends on Sleepers deep down wanting access to truth, but what if the Sleepers like their steady diet of hate and misinformation? In the past, the numbers were much more obvious with centralized misinformation misleading a disenfranchised population which then armed the population against itself. Now Sleepers perform sad populism, where the only goal is to make the scapegoat suffer. Some Adepts hand out the tools for rebellion and don't much care how they're used. They assume any upheaval is ultimately good in a stultified world. Others look on in horror as such rowdy opponents are used to justify crackdowns on basic liberties.

Notable Personalities

The Virtual Adepts attract strong personalities leading strident groups. These are the personalities an in-the-know Adept may run into.

Marisol "Justicio" Coronado

Marisol heads the *Indigenous Learning Collective* and seeks to document, study, and preserve the scientific and mathematical practices of native cultures. She's helped return a set of Ammassalik wooden maps to the Inuit of Greenland. Investigating the carvings led to discoveries regarding communicating with the Court of the Humpback Whale and Narwhal in the Middle Umbra. Marisol has done half a dozen similar learning projects. Marisol is one of the few Adepts to spend significant time in the Umbra outside the Digital Web, and she's currently tracking down a lead regarding the location of two Maya codices in a place called "Stygia."

Marisol believes saving culture is an important end unto itself but finding advances in knot theory through studying Peruvian ropework and other ways of understanding numbers may prove vital in some unknown future situation. She made many friends during her research on both sides of the Gauntlet.

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Idealist

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma (Charming) 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception (Things Out of Place) 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Academics (History) 4, Alertness 2, Art 2, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Computer 1, Cosmology 3, Crafts (Ceramics) 2, Drive 1, Empathy 1, Enigmas 3,

Etiquette 2, Investigation 1, Law 2, Occult 3, Politics 2, Science 1, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 2, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Allies: 2, Avatar: 3, Contacts: 3, Influence: 1, Resources: 2

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 5

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Entropy 2, Matter 1, Mind 3, Time 2, Spirit 2

Image: Marisol is a short round woman with hair going prematurely white around her designer glasses. Her face and skin clearly show her Yaquis heritage and complement her deftness at the combination of body language, wardrobe, and speech required to thrive in Western academic halls, but she always wears a woven shirt of the style of her village.

Roleplaying Notes: You're remarkably tired. Tired of explaining yourself, tired of explaining what you do, and tired of explaining why your work is important. Still, you laugh frequently. You put in the work to understand the world and find it comical how narrow some other people's world views are. You always notice when flowers are around.

Focus: *Tech Holds All the Answers*. Practices include *Craftwork* (**Mage 20**, p. 574) and *Hypertech*. Instruments include just about any physical cultural artifacts which embed knowledge as well as modern electronic computers.

Abina "Chanticleer" Van Der Byl

Born in Soweto shortly after the end of Apartheid, Abina took to early schooling quickly and often pestered her elders with annoying questions of meaning and purpose and truth. University was eye-opening, but questions came up far

faster than answers, leading them to study epistemology and theory of mind to inquire about the nature of intelligence and knowledge. Here they encountered the practical and ethical concerns over artificial general intelligence (AGI). What would the moral state of an artificial self-aware entity be? What if it could experience types and levels of suffering we could not comprehend? Would it be justified in destroying humanity rather than being forced to serve it? If AGIs came about in the process of maximizing goal functions, could they accidentally kill us all and turn us into paperclips? AGI always seemed just around the corner and Abina was worried.

The Adepts found Abina after Awakening and connected them with a group known as *Control Problem* which seeks to destroy the AGI research done by the Technocracy, Nephandi, and even some Sleepers, which causes tension with the Adept *Society of the True Basilisk*. They seek to instantiate an AGI as quickly as possible to save humanity or some such nonsense. There are enough opposing targets for Abina's knives to remain targeted externally, but they will end their fellow Traditionists if needed. They think extinction is in the cards, and that's a threat so dire it justifies any body count.

Nature: Zealot

Demeanor: Activist

Attributes: Strength (Deceptive Strength) 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina (Tough) 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics (Computer Science) 2, Alertness 2, Athletics (Acrobatic) 4, Computer 3, Drive 2, Enigmas 2, Firearms 3, Intimidation 2, Medicine 2, Melee 2, Science 2, Streetwise 2, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 3, Survival 3, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Avatar: 2, Contacts: 2, Destiny: 2, Library 3, Resources: 3, Status 2 **Willpower:** 7

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Arete: 4

Spheres: Data 3, Entropy 3, Forces 3, Life 2, Matter 2, Mind 3

Image: Abina's dark hands are surprisingly calloused and are one of the few ways of telling they are skilled in breaking and entering and yet more serious trades. They have a few scars from the same activities, which they keep meticulously covered. Few looking at them would think they've napalmed an Iteration X research facility or seen the Cronenbergian interior of an Exie server farm within a Nephandic Labyrinth.

Roleplaying Notes: You don't know how far along various Sleepers and Awakened agents are in generating an AGI, so you live every day like it's your

last. You may end up converted to an organic battery or wiped out by an engineered hemorrhagic fever at any moment. This makes you impatient but incredibly attentive to everything you do. Always be recruiting.

Focus: A mix of *Everything is Data* and *Might is Right* tied to the belief that to understand something is to be able to control it. Once you've completed exacting study of a target, system, or idea, it is your plaything through computer models and sometimes even a shouted command. You fear AGI would understand all and thus control all.

Other Personalities

Akasuki "Sword Princess" Yachi: One of the most promising old-school hackers to grace the Adepts in years, Akasuki roams the world looking for ways to expand the Digital Web to create new types of virtual spaces the Technocrats or Sleepers won't ruin. She probably has access to more actual Nodes than any other Adept, and she runs a bit of a hustle selling Tass with useful and exotic Resonance. She's also making friends with Adepts and Masters of the Mind and Forces Spheres, but no one's quite sure why.

Altandöl "Sophia" Batbayar: Not many Adepts are yak herders on the Mongolian steppes. The Tradition got to her first after she Awakened and published groundbreaking papers in sheaf theory. She stayed on the steppes to attend to her herd while using satellite connections to explore Augmented Reality 2.0. Altandöl considers the steppes a fertile testing ground for geotagging technologies and Augmented Reality Objects research (**The Operative's Dossier**, p. 63) because the spare landscape seems to hold few Sleepers to intrude. She also believes Paradox spirits to be afraid of yaks. She is a rare member of both Project Timmy and the First Sector.

Douglas "Hermes" Staffordson: Douglas doesn't consider IT a job so much as a calling. Some speculate he has True Faith in Cat 6e cabling. He keeps his beard well-trimmed on his round frame and his glasses clean as he represents the Virtual Adept belief in freeing people with information. After Awakening he realized how many more types of communication existed and quickly joined and rose in the ranks of the Knights of Ganesha, the elite communications specialists of the Traditions. Douglas helps Chantries with all forms of communications infrastructure including troubleshooting Ouija boards, guiding seances, repairing House Hong Lei jade gates, doing firmware updates for Etheric Noospheric Telluric talkophones, and now adding AR capabilities. Douglas is selfless, but should a need arise, he is owed *many* favors.

Paradigm



Most Adepts believe reality is just an emanation of the *Correspondence Point*. A zero-dimensional locus containing all possibilities and infinite information where time and space are meaningless. The *Hypersphere* containing all possible expressions of information surrounds the *Correspondence Point*. All of space and time we experience is simply the outermost boundary or shell of the *Hypersphere*. The *Correspondence Point* is the question of “what can exist” and the *Hypersphere* contains all possible answers. It roughly corresponds to what other mages call the *Tellurian* with what’s called the *Tapestry* simply being the outermost shell.

The interactions on the shell (the laws of reality, i.e. what is coincidental and vulgar) are determined by the nearby volume of the *Hypersphere* which responds to beliefs of nearby minds. Sleeping Avatars perform error-checking which manifests as *Paradox* or *Unbelief* as inconsistencies in the local *Hypersphere* are observed. An Awakened Avatar can rearrange and redirect structures of the *Hypersphere* causing what we experience on the surface to change in what we know magick. More computer-centric Adepts refer to generating *Paradox* as causing traps, faults, or exceptions as Sleepers process inconsistencies. Sometimes the interior or bulk of the *Hypersphere* moves so quickly bits of it get

embedded in the outer boundary causing *Paradox* flaws to persist until reality’s error correction fixes them.

Belief in the *Correspondence Point* and the *Hypersphere* comes through in paradigms like *Everything is Data* (**Mage 20**, p. 570), often expressed as *A Mechanistic Cosmos* (**Mage 20**, p. 568), and possibly *Might is Right* (**Mage 20**, pp. 570–571) through sheer command of the *Hypersphere*.

Paradigm: Platonism/Mathematicism

Concepts literally exist and are independent from the thinker. Instead of math or beauty being something strictly in the minds of the thinker, ideas exist out there somewhere, and thinking brushes against them gently. Someone with more direct access to thought objects would be able to gain a much stronger idea of what the concept means and change how it emerges in the world. A character may change the world by bringing the embodiment of an idea into reality or, at the highest levels, modifying the idea itself to change reality. Vulgar magick occurs when a mage makes a sudden change to an idea or forcefully instantiates a thought object without modifying the ideascapes appropriately before creating an effect.

Ascension for such a mage is to either become a thought object or to modify the thought object of the cosmos to intrinsically contain the mage.

The State of Trinary Computers

Trinary represents a class of computers instead of a single architecture. While the original computers had three logic states, computer hardware exploded from there to four and eight states and beyond. Sleeper technology went with the much more reliable two states but Awakened magick cleans up a lot. To keep the language easy, all Virtual Adepts simply refer to their decks as “Trinary” to make it easier to communicate with those outside the group. Their devices are more accurately “ternary” computers which have an additional logic state which need not be equal in magnitude to the other two. Many Adepts for instance use optical computers with an additional state representing “dark” with +1 and -1 represented by polarized light.

All Trinary computers (still called *decks*) are quite powerful but only show their true power in the hands of an Awakened user. One explanation of the “tri” in Trinary is while a binary computer has a processor and an operator, the Trinary deck also uses the Avatar. The burn-in process for a deck involves modifying it to benefit from the mage’s Sphere knowledge to create amazing results. An Adept skilled in Forces, Matter or Correspondence gains a considerable edge by improving electricity flow and heat management. A user with Data, Entropy, Life, Time, or Mind enhances the performance by predicting and avoiding dead ends in code execution or personally handling some of the computations the mage may do better than the computer. A mage with Prime or Spirit, is literally bringing out the best in the computer so it operates flawlessly.



Practice: Postmodernism/Hacker Analysis

If post-modernism is a skepticism of metanarratives, post-modernism as a Practice are methods to strip away the cultural and paradigmatic baggage of another practice and uses it to the mage's own ends. The Virtual Adepts use Hacker Analysis to emulate effects done with other mage's foci. The Chorister's four-hour chant to summon an angel is simply a fractal tone row that is calling an entity from memetic space, and once the Adept realizes how, they can do it too. Like many Adept shortcuts, the time required to analyze, translate, and implement the effect takes just as long, but the Adept may now take inspiration from a wide number of magical emanations to create effects. Such a practice rewards a character who explores the magical world, increasing the number of effects they can investigate and mimic though at the cost of time.

Wonders

Virtual Adepts stay at the bleeding edge of not just electronic computers but all forms of computation. Depending on the Adept's preferences, their personal deck may be an advanced Rod Logic Computer, an enzyme-based

organic biodeck, or a Fetish calculator containing a spirit of logic. Math allows hundreds of paths to truth.

•• Rod Logic Computer

Arete n/a, Quintessence 5–10, Background Cost 3 Points

Adepts are skittish about losing access to their kit. As technology advances more people and places are packing electronic countermeasures from metal detectors to EMP grenades. When you need to make vital calculations in harsh electromagnetic, technological, or informational environments, the coolest Adepts bust out their Rod Logic Computers.

Rod Logic Computers are hyperadvanced mechanical computers combining the elegant component design of the Adepts with the materials hyperscience of the Etherites. Internal parts include intricately grown diamond lattices, organoplastic computation membranes, and ultrahard ceramic buffers to do mechanically what most computers do electronically. They are powered simply by being handled, don't set off metal detectors, and are immune to electromagnetic attacks. They are still subject to physical harm, but their compact design and advanced material structure gives them a Durability and Structure of 5 (*Mage 20*, p. 457). Results display either via a micromechanical color screen or via a small

tactile patch affixed to the Adept. The user loads their Rod Logic Computer with several useful programs allowing it to serve as a Focus instead of a traditional computer.

Rotes

Perhaps more than any other Tradition, the Virtual Adepts freely share rotes with one another, allowing for common effects to spread throughout the Tradition at the speed of data transfer. While some Virtual Adepts are guarded about their programs, jealously hoarding their achievements, this sentiment is dying rapidly and is almost exclusively held by the oldest of the Old Guard.

NFTs (Non-Fungible Tass/Talismans)

(••• Mind/ •• Prime; optional •••• Time/
••• Entropy; optional •• Data)

The 2000s were full of mages repatriating artifacts, raiding ancient dens of magick, and sometimes using Tass from dubious sources. The Council tasked the Virtual Adepts with coming up with a way to tag items, and we came up with this rote to keep tabs on items of interest. This can include Infernalist texts, Tass from an important source, or a data object on the Web where the chain of ownership is vital.

System: Mind 3/ Prime 2 with at least 6 successes marks the object with a constant low-level effect that announces the item. This effect is subtle enough Sleepers feel it's giving off vibes, but a mage may investigate it simply by focusing on the object. The tagged item gives a brief description of what the item is and may include its source and rightful owner. The Time 4/ Entropy 3 option causes the item to destroy itself in response to tampering with the tag, and the Data 2 variant rings back to a ledger on the Digital Web, updating who the new owner is each time it changes hands.

Save State

(••• Mind/ •• Time/ •• Prime)

Modern computer systems may take weeks to hack into instead of hours. Long interruptions are disastrous to an Adept as they lose track of their work causing it to fail, possibly catastrophically.

System: The Save State rote allows the Adept to record their exact setup when they leave it, store it as a computer file or set of notes, and return to the exact point, assuming they built up enough duration successes. Success negates the +1 penalty caused by interrupting an Extended Action.

Locate Geospatial Nodal Point

(•••• Forces/ ••• Entropy/
••• Correspondence/ ••• Matter)

This rote caused the New Madrid Incident and was retired. Some Adepts still have it on hand for when you need an earthquake and aren't yet a Master of Forces. Correspondence allows Matter and Entropy to scan an area for the linchpins of disaster, and Forces gives them the appropriate shove to cause an earthquake, trigger an avalanche, cause a tsunami, or other catastrophic effect.

System: This rote is not fast, and the mage must accumulate at least 20 successes on an extended ritual rolling no more than once a month if working alone, once a week with a crew of dozens, or once a day if using the resources of an entire university. Additional successes allow the mage to be more targeted with the damage with 40 successes causing a catastrophe to only destroy a single building and none of its surroundings.



Unlikely Allies

During the height of the Cold War, powers poised to launch nuclear attacks on one another still engaged in indirect diplomacy through culture and science. We must do the same with those who were our enemies and are to be our allies.

The Disparate Alliance

The Disparate Alliance represents the largest unallied group of willworkers on the planet and getting even one of their Crafts to buy into a Virtual Adept project would be a major coup. Many of their groups practice magick hostile to the traditional Virtual Adept tools, and many of our historical members have unclean hands. The Virtual Adepts built the models that found the oil that when removed disempowered the Batini's Web of Faith. Our computational methods guided the bombs that hit the sacred sites of the Wu Lung. The Mercurial Elite faction has had better success and cooperation is again blooming.

The Digital Web still holds secrets we've yet to unravel, and the Ahl-i-Batin are our best allies in figuring them out before someone else does. The Digital Alpinists are exploring the hidden spaces of the Digital Web. The going theory is the Digital Web is just one layer of Mount Qaf, and the peaks sometimes glimpsed in the distance of some Sectors are its

sacred geometry piercing digital space. The Digital Web lets us go a level deeper into the Hypersphere; Mount Qaf may go yet further. Odd that finding the foundations of reality may involve climbing a mountain. While the group hasn't found more than hints about possible hypernodes in the Web, it finds some strange happenings including creatures which appear to be native to the Digital Web.

Our second collaboration is on the mathematical side. Some Batini still chuckle at Penrose "discovering" features of aperiodic tiling the Hidden Ones had used in their shrines for a millennium. I suppose we should stay humble to the group who introduced us to the decimal point.

We have had little success getting the Taftâni to share any of their considerable wealth and connections with us. They consider the Digital Web to be one of the greatest manifestations of Druj to have existed and would actively seek its destruction if its data flows didn't back their financial muscle. Some members are curious for the possibility of augmented reality, allowing more to see Asha when a Weaver cannot be present.

Cooperation with the Sisters of Hippolyta proved productive after an awkward start when they called us "Agents of Hermes" which nearly caused a Flame War.

Digital Natives

Some of the beasties the Batini and Adepts have cataloged:

Kajutids: Floating balls of multi-dimensional cow tongues and horns that appear to be able to control bandwidth within and between Sectors. Their presence ties to reports of an otherwise stable Sector's lagging out such as when the Nephandus "The Rising Moon" was present, causing the serve to crash dumping only her. One webslinger gives credit for avoiding a de-rezing to a helpful kajutid who reduced lag just enough for everyone to leave the Sector before a Whiteout.

Data Cherubs: Data cherubs or digital angelics were thought to be Icons of either the diluted, pious, or ironic, but failed attempts at finding users tied to these figures led to the belief they may be Web entities. They are sometimes seen creating small plots of invaluable Virgin Web or re-arranging Sectors. Since Sectors are more defined by what they're connected to rather than where they are, having the power to move a Sector but doing so to such little effect seems baffling.

Fishkills: No attempt at repairing a Corrupted Sector has yet succeeded, but all webslingers hold out hope after seeing a *fishkill*. Pods of tiny whales flit about the Web eating digital krill in the form of stray bits and bytes that leak from Sectors. Sometimes an entire pod will enter a Corrupted Sector, de-rezing most of its members instantly. A few whales survive and begin eating again to repopulate the pod. The Corrupted Sector seems slightly less destroyed as if the tiny whales helped partially reformat the Corrupted Sector. Some Adepts guess these creatures hold the key to recovering otherwise unrecoverable Web, or at least becoming resistant to its effects. One cetacean-ignorant admin near a Corrupted Sector started calling these events "fishkills" after getting tired of resetting the olfactory protocols for their restaurant sim.

Now the Sisters occasionally drop off recommendations on recruits who may not fit in with their group, and in exchange we provide intelligence and logistical support on some of their less suicidal initiatives. “Death before slavery” is a motto we can get behind, although their fondness for the “death” side of that statement well exceeds ours. Their ability to find oppressed groups and fight those who hold people under their thumbs is taken by some members to show the Adepts having gone soft.

In exceedingly rare cases, a Nephandus reaches out to the Virtual Adepts with a request to stop another of their kind. While many of the Fallen wish to kill off humanity, each one seemingly wants to take credit for it. These situations represent true conundrums for the Adepts because of the near impossibility of separating a request to stop someone who’s distributing recipes for a superflu in a Restricted Sector from a trap to kill us, their opposition on the Digital Web. Such arrangements require a hefty payment or some very enticing collateral.

The Technocratic Union

Two contact points within the Technocracy maintain professional relationships with the Virtual Adepts and have for decades.

The Strategic Prognostications and Data Dispersal Unit (SPDDU) a.k.a. Cassandra Complex

For the brief period after World War II, but before we left, the Technocracy wanted to never again be wrongfooted by large-scale supernatural threats and thus the SPDDU was formed. One popular rumor implies Cassandra Complex formed from a collection of paranoid New World Order members, some of our more contemplative members,

and a lost house of Hermetics. We only worked with the Cassandra Complex for a short period, but their work was a mix between surreal and uncanny.

Periodically, an Adept receives a cryptic message delivered by anything ranging from a millimeter wave transmission to a homing pigeon. Following it almost always disrupts a child-trafficking ring, someone distributing nuclear secrets, or something else equally terrible, but these cryptic missions are often high risk. Does Cassandra Complex view us as the most elite or the most expendable?

Void Engineer Cybernauts

Two groups of Technocrats dominate the Digital Web: the Iterators who also view it as a means to reformat reality and the Void Engineers who consider it another frontier. As the Digital Web grows, other denizens in the Umbra take notice. As a Zone, the Web connects to seemingly everywhere. If you play by the Web’s rules, it’s also easier to get from there to Meatspace versus crossing the Gauntlet, and some things, some very powerful things, are slowly learning those rules. The next massive Umbral incursion may not be summoned so much as downloaded.

The Void Engineers try to identify any novel phenomenon and catalog it, send in the Iterators to de-rez it, or pass it to the Progenitor’s Computation Life Division for further study. If something is too precious to destroy or dissect but too hard to exploit, they may pass it to us. Backrooms of the Spy’s Demise are dedicated to moving bits of information back and forth in coded language, and we recognize each other’s work. We envy their budget and mock their protocols while they envy our freedom and mock our naiveté.



Future Fates

Who's in Charge?

Depending on how your game treats the metaplot of **Mage**, the default top of the Virtual Adept hierarchy will vary depending on how the Great Crash, the Avatar Storm, and the New Horizon Council exist in your game. Here are some options:

- **The Avatar Storm Never Happened or it's Still the 90s:** Archmaster Roger Thackery (**Horizon: the Stronghold of Hope**, pp. 103–104) still heads the Virtual Adepts as he has since the early 60s. He remains the undisputed master hacker of the Tradition who, if legend is true, could overclock an abacus. The Old Guard consider him their greatest ally as he feels the younger members never had to fight for respectability and acceptance in the same way as he did. Those younger members fight for a different kind of acceptance, and he can likely be brought around to their way of thinking. In a *Chronicle* with *Nephandi Infiltration of the Technocracy*, Thackery may be an immensely powerful ally in assisting organizations like Project Invictus or the Disparate Alliance with his deep but outdated knowledge of the Technocracy hierarchy and strong personal connections among those sad to have seen the Adepts leave the Union.
- **The Avatar Storm Happened or The New Horizon Council Formed:** Master Catherine Blass (**Tradition Book: Virtual Adepts**, p. 71) represents the Virtual Adepts. Catherine works under a half dozen pseudonyms each with the requisite skills to negotiate cooperation between the traumatized Traditions while she serves as an information broker and coordinator among the more diffuse Council. Blass lends significant credence to the Mercurial Elite faction both because of her voracious appetite for new forms of magick to investigate and for her advocacy of outreach to cultures ignored by other Traditions. Blass is excited by the number of new players on the

Digital Web and feels it'll help relieve pressure on the Adepts in policing the information landscape.

- **Nephandic Infiltration of the Technocracy:** If your game has a Technocracy riddled with Nephandic operatives and influences, the Virtual Adepts' cache of liberated data from their departure may prove to be an inadvertent treasure trove. The liberated data may contain useful Adjustments and Procedures the Technocracy used to ward off Infernal taint before the Fallen infiltrated the Ivory Tower and purged them. Gaining access to the code for a "Hierarchical Entropic Resonance Inspection" could quickly reveal taint throughout the Technocracy and disseminating it could result in an almost instant war within the Union.

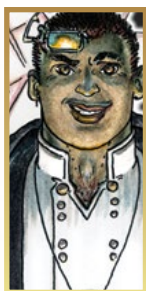
The personnel files of the Inner Circle may still hold vital clues to the Great Old Men running the Technocracy. Despite the files being 60 years old, the slow turnover in the Inner Circle suggests such information could be quite useful. Such data would count as either a key component of the person's True Name or allow even those with low-level understanding of the Data Sphere to find the target or at least find their likely powerful Data Sphere wards.

Alternatively, if the Technocracy was already corrupted at the time of the Virtual Adepts' defection, the Tradition could hold sleeper cells, dormant programs, and background processes present since joining the Traditions. These programs could have been passing vital information to the Dark Ones for decades. Such timely information explains how the Nephandi's seeming takeover of the Sleeper Web has proven so successful so quickly and so resistant to the Tradition's efforts to stop them. Other technomantic groups like the Lhaksmists, Digibena, or the Society of Ether's Web Explorators may have noticed leaks of vital information and have traced the source. The same way the Euthanatoi purged the Traditions of the Janissaries after the fall of Horizon, a multi-Tradition taskforce may be poised to clean out the Virtual Adepts.

Appendix: Infamous and Influential Mages

“What a fine persecution – to be kept intrigued without ever quite being enlightened.”

— Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*



Mage: The Ascension has incorporated colorful and compelling signature characters since its inception. These signature characters are designed to inspire and inform Storytellers and players as they craft their own Mage chronicles. They also provide allies and antagonists for Storytellers to incorporate into their stories. The characters compiled in this appendix are among the most dangerous, influential, and powerful to appear throughout Mage’s publication history. Each character has been crafted to reflect the current ruleset. Those who’ve been previously published have also been updated to reflect the passage of time since their last publication.

In addition to personal histories and game traits, each character includes plot hooks which the Storyteller may use to incorporate the character into their ongoing story, or as a springboard to launch an entirely new chronicle. While most of the characters included are members of the Traditions, a few notable enemies have been included as well. Future Fates that may impact the character, and the effects of those Future Fates on the characters are explored where pertinent.

Traditionalists

Throughout the past five centuries, several luminaries have risen to prominence among the Traditions. The mages detailed in this section are some of the most widely known, respected, and feared among all Tradition mages.

Dante

Desmond Collingsworth III was born Awakened. As the product of Progenitor research, the young child was taken from his birth mother and placed with Technocratic sympathizers to grant him the illusion of an American suburban childhood.

With his safety and comfort assured by Operatives monitoring his life in secret, Desmond was able to shine in his studies. His remarkable intelligence led Desmond to graduate high school at age eight. He was admitted to Harvard, where he graduated at the top of his class, and by age 17, he’d completed his Ph.D and MD. Upon completing his medical studies, the Technocracy emerged from the shadows of his life, hoping to integrate Desmond into the Progenitors. His handlers grossly underestimated how angry Desmond would become at the revelation that his life was a lie.

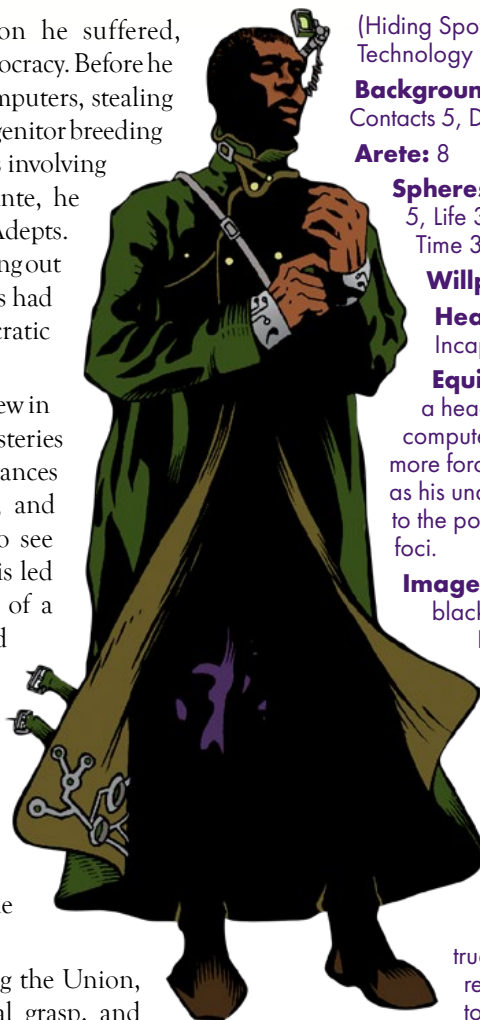
Furious at the manipulation he suffered, Desmond ran away from the Technocracy. Before he fled, he was able to hack their computers, stealing terabytes of information about Progenitor breeding experiments and secret operations involving other kids. Taking the name Dante, he defected and joined the Virtual Adepts. He spent the next several years seeking out and liberating children whose lives had been manipulated by the Technocratic Union.

As time went on and Dante grew in power, he began unlocking the mysteries of reality one by one. Through advances understanding of codes, puzzles, and problem-solving, Dante started to see beneath the surface of reality. This led him to understand the presence of a core operating system that dictated reality's parameters. Dante studied this system, consulted with other mages, and engaged in trial and error. Eventually he began to understand the true nature of reality. With that understanding came means and methods to hack the system, reshaping reality into the form he desired.

Now, after decades of fighting the Union, freeing children from their banal grasp, and aiding the Traditions in their quest for survival, Dante has arrived at a precipice. He's beginning to grasp the secrets of the universe to a degree that surpasses even those he's considered mentors and allies such as Porthos or Marianna of Balador. Can he set aside his earthly concerns and embrace Ascension? Must he turn his back on true understanding to stay behind and aid in the fight for reality? Dante must choose soon, and his choice could have consequences for mages of all factions.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity (Quick) 4, Stamina (Inexhaustible) 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation (Eloquence) 4, Appearance 3, Perception (Uncanny Insight) 5, Intelligence (Creative) 5, Wits (Cunning) 5

Abilities: Alertness (Covert Pursuit) 4, Academics (Liberal Arts) 4, Athletics 3, Awareness (Hidden Magic) 5, Brawl 2, Computer (Hacking) 5, Cosmology (Hazards) 5, Drive 3, Empathy 2, Enigmas (Codes and Ciphers) 5, Esoterica (Sacred Geometry) 4, Etiquette 3, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation 4, Leadership (Competent) 4, Medicine (Diagnosis) 4, Meditation 3, Melee 2, Occult (Mystic Lore) 5, Politics (Virtual Adepts) 4, Science (Computer Science) 5, Streetwise



(Hiding Spots) 4, Stealth 3, Subterfuge (Cheating) 4, Technology (Technomagic) 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Arcane 5, Avatar 5, Contacts 5, Destiny 5, Dream 5, Library 7, Resources 4

Arete: 8

Spheres: Correspondence 5, Entropy 2, Forces 5, Life 3, Matter 3, Mind 5, Prime 3, Spirit 3, Time 3

Willpower: 10

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Dante uses a haptic glove and a heads-up display to access his customized computer deck. His reliance on these tools is more force of habit than strict necessity these days, as his understanding of Magick has advanced to the point where he can largely choose to shun foci.

Image: Dante appears as a tall, slender, black man in his late thirties or early forties.

He prefers to dress in black slacks and shoes, a white button-down shirt, and a brown trenchcoat. When appearing on the Digital Web, Dante crafts an icon that resembles his physical body, though he's happy to conform his icon to local preferences.

Roleplaying Notes: After years of searching, you've finally found the answers you've always sought. You've cracked the code and gotten your first true glimpse into the operating system all reality runs on. You know you're going to need to decide, and soon, what to do with that knowledge. Will you cast aside mortal concerns and ascend? Will you abandon ultimate understanding so you might guide others on the path to Ascension as an Oracle? Only you can choose your fate, but can you live with the consequences of that choice?

Focus: Dante knows that we all live in *A Mechanistic Cosmos* (**Mage 20** p. 568). He uses *Craftwork* (**Mage 20** p. 576) to construct computer components capable of processing the vast amount of data his workings require. This often manifests as *Hypertech* (**Mage 20** p. 579) and enables Dante to employ *Reality Hacking* (**Mage 20** p. 581) to achieve his goals.

Plot Hooks

Whether at the center of intrigue, or simply a catalyst for adventure, Dante can inspire several stories.

- **Collingsworth IV:** The troupe discovers evidence pointing toward a Progenitor project called Collingsworth IV. As they investigate, they unearth a plan to recreate the genetic research that led to Dante's creation. While the Technocracy lost control over Dante, there's plenty of dangerous information they could glean from repeating

Future Fates: Riddles and Enigmas

Dante's fate is left ambiguous in **Mage 20**. Even the Future Fates that deal with Horizon and the fate of the Traditions remain silent on the matter of this infamous Virtual Adept. Where he fits in is up to the Storyteller to determine. As presented in this book, Dante is a highly enlightened mage on the verge of personal Ascension. If he turns his back on that goal now, he'll take his place among the Oracles. In chronicles featuring the Sphinx (Future Fates: The Traditions, **Mage 20** p. 137, Future Fates: The Sphinx, **Mage 20** p. 144) it's possible that Dante has become an Oracle and taken the Sphinx as his new form. Alternatively, he may act as a foil for the Sphinx. In this case, Dante reaches out to Council mages providing alternate courses of action to those the Sphinx advocates. Delving into the nature and origin of tensions between Dante and the Sphinx could be a chronicle all on its own.

the experiment. The party must determine what to do about this proposed clone.

- **Format Error:** A friend of the troupe reaches out for help tracking down a mysterious signal. Whenever she logs onto the Digital Web, Acid Queen receives a stream of seemingly junk data, though the data is signed by the Sphinx. She's investigated but has so far been unable to make sense of the broadcast or identify its origin. She hopes the troupe can join her on the Digital Web to track this odd transmission to its source.

Marianna of Balador

Marianna of Balador was born in the early 1800s in Venice, Italy. She Awakened at a young age to remarkable power, in part due to the Avatar she shares with Sahajiya Master Akrites Salonikas. While most mages stumble through the period following their Awakening filled with

questions and doubt, Marianna had the comfort and luxury of prophetic visions and flashes of insight from lifetimes worth of experience through her connection with Akrites. The Master eventually sought Marianna out, instructing her in the ways of the Sahajiya and further opening her mind to the wonders of ecstatic wisdom.

Marianna spent nearly two centuries traveling the world in search of pleasure and wisdom. During her travels she developed a reputation for hunting down and dealing with sexual predators, traffickers, and those who would twist healthy passion into banal exploitation. She became a champion of the Code of Ananda and a shining example of potential to younger cultists. By the 1970s when Marianna was given control of Balador Chantry, she'd cemented her status as a legendary member of the Cult. She accepted the Seat of Time on the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions shortly thereafter and was a prominent member of the Council throughout the turn of the century.



Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina (Tireless) 5, Charisma (Sexy) 5, Manipulation (Charm) 4, Appearance (Captivating) 5, Perception (Intuitive) 4, Intelligence (Creative) 4, Wits (Fox-Witted) 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics (Extreme Endurance) 4, Awareness (Omens) 4, Brawl 3, Cosmology 4, Empathy 5, Enigmas 4, Esoterica 4, Etiquette 3, Expression 4, Intuition 4, Law 4, Leadership 5, Medicine 3, Meditation 4, Melee 2, Occult 5, Politics 4, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4, Survival 2

Backgrounds: Allies 6, Arcane 3, Avatar 5, Destiny 4, Influence 4, Library 6, Mentor 5, Status (Cult of Ecstasy) 5

Arete: 8

Merits: Twin Souls (Akrites Salonikas) 4

Spheres: Correspondence 5, Entropy 3, Forces 4, Life 5, Matter 5, Mind 5, Prime 4, Spirit 4, Time 5

Willpower: 9

Paradox: 8

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Future Fates: Time for Change

Most Future Fates presented in **Mage 20** imply the mages of the old Council are dead or missing in the modern era. Future Fates: The Horizon War, Doissetep, and the Storm (**Mage 20** p. 110) is a major fulcrum point for Marianna. If the Council of Nine fell, it's likely Marianna fell with it. However, a Master of Time and Life isn't going to go down easily. It's possible Marianna escaped the fall of Horizon through clever magick. She could have simply removed herself from the flow of time when it became clear that Concordia was going to fall. Alternatively, she may be long dead, but still in communication with mages from the present through her mastery of Time and Mind magick. For a mage of Marianna's power death needn't be more than an inconvenience.

Armor Rating: # (Source)

Attacks/ Powers: Describe

Equipment: List with page references to source as needed.

Image: Marianna is a master of Life with a penchant for shapeshifting. She's a scholar of beauty in all its forms and crafts her appearance to conform to different beauty standards depending on the day, her mood, and her planned activities. She rarely retains one appearance for long, occasionally frustrating friends and allies by adopting radically different appearances between meetings.

Roleplaying Notes: You're radically kind. As a firm believer in the power of love, acceptance, and joy as transformative tools, you lead from a place of acceptance and warmth. You have little patience for those who would pervert those lofty ideals, and even less for those who actively seek to undermine joy through stuffy, strict regulations. Even those who exhaust your patience typically avoid your ire, instead soliciting your pity and disappointment. Only when someone maliciously inflicts suffering on another is your anger truly roused. When such occasion occurs, you're capable of unleashing terrifying wrath through extensive magickal mastery.

Focus: Marianna believes *Creation is Innately Divine and Alive* (**Mage 20** p. 569) and she seeks to tap into that living pulse through *The Art of Desire* (**Mage 20** p. 573), *Crazy Wisdom* (**Mage 20** p. 576), and *Yoga* (**Mage 20** p. 585).

Plot Hooks

As a seer of nearly unparalleled power and insight, Marianna can serve as a catalyst for plot developments through visions, messages, and prophecies.

- **The Master Returns:** A woman claiming to be Marianna of Balador approaches the troupe. She's injured and confused. She has no memory of how she got to Earth or of how she found the mages. Her last memory is desperately reaching beyond time when she witnessed her soulmate, Akrites, destroy himself

in the battle with the Ascension Warrior (see **War in Heaven** for details.) After decades outside of time, Marianna has a lot of catching up to do. The troupe must serve as protectors and mentors as the Master regains her footing and becomes accustomed to the 21st Century.

- **Prophetic Dreams:** A member of the troupe begins experiencing bizarre visions and dreams. A beautiful woman has been haunting the mage's dreams, offering prophetic warnings, advice, and pleas for action. She claims to be a fallen Master who couldn't stop the destruction of Horizon, but who sees opportunities to prevent greater future calamities, if only the troupe can act on her prophecies. Is this some sort of trick, or has the Master of Balador chosen the mages as her instruments in the present?

Mark Hallward Gillian

Mark Gillian grew up moving from place to place as his father, a military man, was transferred. Upon reaching age 18, Mark followed in his father's footsteps, joining the U.S. Army. While in the Army, Mark studied the writings of Aleister Crowley and began unlocking rudimentary secrets of Hermeticism. This influx of chaos into Mark's life proved disastrous for his military career, and he was discharged early at the age of 20. Luckily, Mark's antics had been noticed by a mage of House Flambeau who recruited Mark and convinced him to join the Order of Hermes. Mark's early years with the Order were tumultuous. He chafed against the rules and protocols his superiors imposed, eventually striking out on his own.

Despite (or perhaps because of) his difficulty with authority, Mark drew the attention of Hermetic Archmaster Porthos Fitz-Empress. Porthos saw great potential in Mark and brought him back into the Tradition as his protégé. During this time, Mark gathered and presented damning evidence regarding the House of Helekar to the Council.



While his actions helped shed light on corruption within the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy, politicking and slander drove him to leave the Order once again.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina (Tough) 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception (Gut Feelings) 4, Intelligence (Quick) 4, Wits (Nonchalant) 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Cosmology 3, Drive 2, Enigmas 3, Enochian 3, Esoterica 2, Etiquette 1, Expression 1, Firearms 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Leadership 1, Medicine 1, Occult (Gematria) 4, Science 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Umbrood Protocols 3

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Arcane 3, Avatar 1, Contacts 5, Resources 3, Wonder 5

Merits: Language 5

Arete: 6

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Forces 4, Matter 2, Mind 2, Prime 4, Spirit 4

Willpower: 8

Paradox: 2

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: # (Source)

Attacks/ Powers: Describe

Equipment: Mark prepares Fetishes and Charms as needed. He has 15 points to spend on Fetishes and Charms before any appearance and can reconfigure how those points are spent with a single scene of downtime.

Image: Mark is a man in his late fifties whose face shows the strain of years of hard living and tense conflict. His sharp eyebrows are separated by deep scowl lines.

His once black hair is now shot through with gray. Thanks to a permanent Paradox flaw, Mark always feels cold. To fight off the chill, he dresses in a charcoal gray trench coat over a heavy sweater and jeans, regardless of the local weather conditions.

Roleplaying Notes: You've got little use for authority and a strong moral compass. This combination has earned you no end of trouble on either side of your Awakening. You believe in order and structure, but you also believe that systems of structure that can't withstand constant pressure from chaos don't deserve to stand. While some might take your actions as rebellion for rebellion's sake, you know better. Every attack you make on authority is designed to strengthen worthy systems and wipe away those that aren't. If other people can't see that, that's their goddamn problem.

Focus: Mark believes in *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos* (**Mage 20** p. 569) which he channels, controls, or unleashes through *Alchemy* (**Mage 20** p. 573), *Chaos Magick* (**Mage 20** p. 574), and *High Ritual Magick* (**Mage 20** p. 578).

Plot Hooks

Mark Gillian's reputation for bucking the system and creating chaos is well deserved. He's been a thorn in the side of stuffy elders as long as he's been a Hermetic. He unearths dirty secrets and drags them into the light for all to see. Despite claims by his detractors, his actions are rarely politically motivated. However, if a dusty relic of a mage gets their nose out of joint over the truth, Mark won't lose much sleep over it.

- **The Mighty Have Fallen:** Evidence implicating Mark Gillian as a possible Nephandus is anonymously delivered to the troupe. While the evidence is damning, including recorded phone calls between Gillian and a woman claiming to be Jodi Blake, it's far from ironclad. The party must investigate to determine whether Gillian is now Fallen. If not, what's his game? Is he manipulating Blake? Is he just not Fallen yet? If he has Fallen, can the party bring him to justice?
- **Reconstruction:** After years of work, Tradition mages have reestablished stable and reliable connections to the remains of Doissetep. After deliberation, the current Council of Nine have decided to place Mark Gillian in charge of the Chantry's reconstruction. The work promises to be challenging, but any mages who can establish a foothold in the new Doissetep power structure now are guaranteed to see their efforts pay dividends in the future.
- **Watching the Watchmen:** Mark Gillian arrives in town, seeking an audience with the troupe. He claims to have unearthed evidence of corruption within the Friends

Future Fates: Outcast, Primus, or Free Agent

Mark Gillian played a significant role in revealing Voormas and his followers as corrupt. Where he went from there is up to the Storyteller and may vary wildly depending on which Future Fates are in play. The fate of Doissetep, discussed in *Future Fates: Doissetep* (**Mage 20** p. 50) and *Future Fates: The Horizon War*, Doissetep, and the Storm (**Mage 20** p. 110) deeply impacts Gillian's present. If Doissetep still stands and Porthos yet lives, Mark likely remains close to the Archmage. If Doissetep stands, but Porthos died, Mark may have assumed leadership of the powerful Chantry. Depending on the outcome selected from *Future Fates: The Traditions* (**Mage 20** p. 137) Mark may have great influence on the Rogue Council. He may even be a member. If pursuing the *Fallen Traditions?* (**Mage 20** p. 139) option, Mark may be working alongside some rogue group investigating the corruption, such as the Friends of Courage. Or, in hunting monsters for decades Mark may have succumbed to temptation and ennui, becoming Fallen himself.

of Courage. If these accusations are true, it could send shockwaves throughout both the Traditions and the Technocracy. While both factions may be cautious where the Friends of Courage are concerned, neither suspect them of Fallen influence. Whether or not Mark's information is accurate, he believes it. Can the troupe get him to hang back while they work to uncover the truth?

Porthos Fitz-Empress

Born in 1403, Porthos was just a young mage when the Grand Convocation led to the formation of the Council of Nine. When the March of the Nine took place, he counted several of the ill-fated mages on that mission among his friends. He shared in their joys and mourned their losses along with the other mages of the era. While he condemned Heyle's betrayal, Porthos could see the point they were trying to make. The Traditions, with all their internal fractures and politicking were in no shape to take on the Order of Reason who stood united in common purpose. Since that revelation, Porthos has worked to bring the Traditions together under common purpose and protection.

Unfortunately, like many mages, Porthos often allowed his hubris to stand in the way of his goals. His ambitions led him to Archmastery



and to control of one of the greatest Chantries in Tradition history. Yet despite these accomplishments, he couldn't save the Solificati from disbanding, nor could he prevent the Ahli-i-Batin from defecting from the Council. The power he's amassed did little to preserve unity among the Nine Mystick Traditions.

In the 20th Century, Porthos found new hope. The admission of the Virtual Adepts in the 1960s brought the Council back to a full Nine member Traditions, which many mages took as a portent of hope for the future. The influx of new ideas inspired Porthos and he took an active hand in Tradition matters, often acting as a patron and mentor to younger mages.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma (Inspirational) 4, Manipulation (Guile) 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence (Deep Thoughts) 6, Wits (Cunning) 4

Abilities: Academics (History) 5, Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness (Omens) 6, Cosmology (Otherworldly Etiquette) 6, Enigmas (Metaphysics) 6, Enochian (Commands) 5, Esoterica (Alchemy) 5, Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Intuition 5, Leadership (Competent) 6, Melee 2, Occult (Folk Magic) 5, Politics (Traditions) 5, Stealth 1, Subterfuge (Sensing Deceptions) 5, Survival 1, Umbrood Protocols (Forging Pacts) 5

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Arcane 5, Avatar 5, Destiny 3, Dream 5, Library 10

Merits: Language (Arabic, English, Farsi, Greek, Latin, Mandarin) 6

Arete: 9

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Entropy 5, Forces 6, Life 4, Matter 3, Mind 5, Prime 5, Spirit 4, Time 3

Willpower: 10

Paradox: 10

Future Fates: Dead, Alive, or Somewhere in Between

Many of the Future Fates presented in **Mage 20** assume Porthos is dead. The fate of Doissetep, discussed in Future Fates: Doissetep (**Mage 20** p. 50) and Future Fates: The Horizon War, Doissetep, and the Storm (**Mage 20** p. 110) are the most pertinent to Porthos and how you include him in your chronicles. If Doissetep still stands and Porthos yet lives, he can stand as a distant but potent mentor figure, or perhaps, an inscrutable rival who creates obstacles for the players. If Doissetep stands, but Porthos died, he may remain in some sort of spiritual form, acting as a disembodied advisor, or working through messages and directives left with his own spirit servants prior to his demise.

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Though Porthos rarely carries any sort of equipment, he has access to the treasures and Wonders of Doissetep. There are few items he can't acquire should the need arise.

Image: Porthos appears as a disheveled man in his middle sixties. His stringy black hair dangles around his shoulders. He wears bifocal spectacles and typically dresses in a gray pinstripe suit.

Roleplaying Notes: You have little doubt that you're the most powerful being in the room. You must constantly remind yourself that's no reason to underestimate your opponents (or your allies for that matter.) You want to assume a fatherly role, especially for young mages who you believe have the potential to bring positive change to the Traditions. You want to be encouraging and offer guidance without interfering too much. You know just how easily a Master can hijack the plans and accomplishment of those under his tutelage. Likewise, you know the Traditions need fresh ideas and approaches if they have any hope to survive. Some believe the playful way you engage other mages in your favor is a sign of your encroaching senility. The same observers whisper that the ruthlessness with which you dispatch your enemies is likewise a sign of madness.

Focus: You've been around long enough to know we live in *A World of Gods and Monsters* (**Mage 20** p. 568). You've amassed enough power over your six centuries of life to qualify as both. You channel your magick through *Alchemy* (**Mage 20** p. 573), *High Ritual Magick* (**Mage 20** p. 578), and a bit of *Crazy Wisdom* (**Mage 20** p. 576).

Plot Hooks

Porthos constantly has a network of plots, schemes, and plans in motion. Some are centuries old, while some were concocted in recent months. Some are of cosmic importance, while others are matters of personal interest. Even Porthos isn't above petty squabbling with his fellow Masters. Even in the event of his death, many of Porthos's plans continue moving forward.

- **Cascading Schemes:** Not even the grave can put an end to the scheming and sabotage of Doissetep's mages.

While investigating claims of infernalism within House Flambeau, the troupe discovers evidence of a frame job. Relics and writings within a prominent mage's library point to corruption, but scrutiny reveals these items to be forgeries. As the mages investigate further, they find evidence linking these forgeries to the Janissaries of Doissetep.

- **Into the Ruins:** The troupe is sent to investigate the ruins of Doissetep. Their goal is to recover a potent Grimoire called the Principia Virium. This is allegedly the tome Porthos authored while unlocking the secrets of Archmaster level Forces. During their search they come upon a spirit claiming to be Porthos. He says he has a plan to resurrect himself, but that he can only complete the ritual if he's in possession of a body. Will one of the mages offer themselves to the archmage as a vessel? Can they find or create another suitable host for Porthos?
- **Power Play:** A mage claiming to be Porthos approaches the troupe for assistance in regaining his lost power. According to this mage, he went into hiding after the fall of Doissetep and began biding his time until he felt it was safe to emerge from the shadows. Now as the Traditions face some of their greatest challenges, the archmaster has returned intent on exerting whatever influence he can muster to right the ship and steer the Council of Nine toward prosperity and victory. He just needs a little help from the player characters to get back on his feet. He wants their aid reestablishing his networks of contacts, spies, and influence.

Theora Hetrick

Theora's family were morticians specializing in preparing victims of severe bodily trauma and mutilation for open casket funerals. The Hetricks were renowned throughout the Baltimore area for their skill. Theora awakened in the



basement of the family funeral home when one of the corpses — that of a recently deceased Euthanatos — sat up in her presence. She felt an unnatural connection with the corpse, one that allowed her to share its feelings and experiences as it wandered out of the funeral home and into traffic. As the corpse was shattered again in oncoming traffic, Theora experienced a vicarious death, which set her on a Thanatoic path.

Rather than shrink from this Awakening in fear, Theora began experimenting with the corpses brought to her funeral home. When her father found her in the basement playing with a reanimated corpse, he began beating her while shouting accusations of demon possession and unholy congress. In a desperate attempt to defend herself, Theora grabbed a scalpel and slew her father.

Terrified, Theora took to the streets, where she lived for a year before Voormas discovered her. He took the young mage under his wing, shaping her into the perfect killer for the Consanguinity of Eternal Joy. She served Voormas faithfully until the House of Helekar fell, at which time Senex took Theora under his wing. The Old Man hoped to illustrate through Theora that redemption was possible for mages thought lost to Morbidity.

Now, after a lengthy period of rehabilitation and training, Theora acts as a Herald for Senex. She travels around the world delivering messages, speaking on Senex's behalf, and gathering information about other Chakravanti. Although she's been in this role for some time, and her behavior has been exemplary, most other mages treat her with cold suspicion. Theora doesn't mind much and never lets the fear and ignorance of other mages interfere with her mission.

She's earned Senex's trust and has no intention of tarnishing that accomplishment.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity (Steady) 4, Stamina 3, Charisma (Sympathetic) 4, Manipulation (Disarming) 4, Appearance (Innocent) 4, Perception (Empathic) 5, Intelligence (Memory) 5, Wits (Unhesitating) 5

Abilities: Alertness (Blindsight) 4, Athletics (Balance) 4, Awareness 3, Brawl (Strangulation) 5, Computer 2, Cosmology 3, Drive 1, Enigmas (Ethical Dilemmas) 4, Esoterica 1, Etiquette 3, Expression 3, Firearms (Light Pistols) 4, Intimidation 2, Investigation (Counter-Forensics) 4, Medicine 3, Meditation (Therapeutic) 4, Melee (Knives) 5, Occult 1, Research 3, Stealth (Shadows) 5, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Backgrounds: Avatar 4, Arcane 5, Destiny 5, Dream 1, Mentor 5

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 3, Forces 1, Life 3, Mind 3, Prime 2, Spirit 2

Willpower: 9

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Although she's competent with a variety of weapons, Theora refuses to carry any.

Image: Theora is a slim woman in her mid forties. Her dark brown hair has several gray streaks, and her large brown eyes are beginning to develop crow's feet. Her voice is soft and kind. When she speaks, she projects confidence and conviction, if not volume.

Roleplaying Notes: You survived a great ordeal throughout your apprenticeship to Voormas. That tenacity serves you now as you contend with judgmental stares, quips, and accusations from your fellow mages. You're always on some form of errand for Senex, so you've always got official business to point interactions with other mages toward. You get very little downtime or solitude and value both deeply. Carefully consider your words and actions, as you know from firsthand experience how much damage a misstep can cause.

Focus: *The Great Wheel Turns* (p. XX) which Theora is called to maintain through High Ritual (**Mage 20** p. 578) and Sacrifice (p. XX). Practicing Yoga (**Mage 20** p. 585) has been a boon in Theora's quest for redemption and to remain free from darker impulses.

Plot Hooks

For chronicles focused on Tradition politics and leadership, Theora serves as a useful way of learning the Council's wishes and plans or receiving information from Senex. Her time is dedicated to serving Senex's agenda, leaving little room for personal errands, agendas, or squabbles.

- **A Good Life:** Theora approaches the mages with a request from Senex himself. The Old Man warns

Future Fates: Without Senex

Theora's role in the Traditions is dependent upon her relationship with Senex. If the Old Man is no longer around in your chronicle, you must determine how this affects Theora's relationship with other Chakravanti and with mages of other Traditions. Is she publicly accepted, but viewed privately as a threat? Do other Tradition mages shun her, fearing the corruption of Voormas lives on in his only living apprentice? Do they declare her *barabbi* and call for her death and Gilgul? Perhaps she finds another master to serve within the Traditions. Or, maybe she's done enough by the time the Old Man leaves the picture to earn the trust of her fellow mages. It's possible she could leave the Traditions altogether, seeking shelter among the Disparate Alliance or striking out on her own.

that a teen named Eric Turner is being targeted by a Chakravanti assassin named Lewis Hook (p. XX) for the Good Death. According to Senex's visions, Eric Turner has a complicated destiny that requires him to do much more during this incarnation. Theora was sent to warn the assassin of his mistake, but Hook refused to listen. Theora asks the mages to intervene and save Eric. If pressed, she confesses her desire to avoid killing Hook, which is why she's asked the mages to intercede. As Senex's Herald, she wants to avoid getting Chakravanti blood on her hands whenever possible. She fears she has no tools to stop Hook with

other than murder, though she hopes the party might have other ideas.

- **Ghosts of Helekar:** While the Miami Helekar House was destroyed when Helekar fell, a new housing complex has risen in its place. The people living in that complex are now experiencing terrifying hauntings. Theora lived in the Miami h during her time with the Consanguinity of Joy. She and her Chantrymates killed countless people during her time under Voormas, and it seems some of those restless souls have returned. These ghosts are angry and confused, striking out at any living they can reach.

The Vile

Some mages are simply reprehensible and irredeemable. They're not to be bargained with or trusted, and even temporary alliances are out of the question. Such mages have gone down dark paths and entered the realm of legend as servants of dark forces.

Jodi Blake

Jodi Blake is an infamous infernal Nephandic mage who has been a thorn in the Council of Nine's side since their inception. At over 600 years of age, Jodi's been a player in the Ascension War from the beginning. She's traded barbs, blows, and retorts with Tradition mages, Technocrats and Disparates over the centuries and few other mages are so widely reviled as her. Even though the Traditions, the Technocracy, and at least one major faction of vampires all have bounties on her head, Jodi has managed to stay one step ahead of her enemies since the 1400s.

Jodi's longevity is the result of endless dealmaking and subterfuge. She takes great delight in pitting her enemies against one another and loves the thrill of sending those who hunt her on wild goose chases. Between her mastery of Life magick and her extensive knowledge of disguise, Jodi never retains a single appearance for long. She slips into and out of assumed identities with great ease, and never enters a situation without several exit strategies in mind.

Some might think Jodi is paranoid, but her caution is well-advised. Apart from the enemies Jodi has made among the Awakened and Night-Folk, some of the very forces she serves would like to see her destroyed. Miss Blake sold her soul long ago, and her creditors are

long overdue to collect their due. Jodi's magick has preserved her youth so far, but with each passing decade, the weight of accumulated Paradox gets a little heavier. She knows she's swiftly running out of time and will soon have to pay the price for 600 years of sins. If she can bring about the end of all things, she reasons, she can escape her cosmic comeuppance. After all, she can't be dragged into hell for eternal torment if there's no hell left to be dragged to.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina (Inexhaustible) 5, Charisma (Sexy) 4, Manipulation (Charm) 5, Appearance (Captivating) 4, Perception 3, Intelligence (Creative) 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Academics 2, Athletics (Extreme Endurance) 4, Awareness (Mystic Instincts) 5, Brawl 3, Crafts (Body Modifications) 3, Cosmology (Otherworldly Etiquette) 4, Empathy 2, Enigmas (Metaphysics) 4, Esoterica (Demonology) 5, Etiquette 3, Intimidation (BDSM) 4, Investigation 2, Leadership (Inspiring) 4, Medicine (Physical Deconstruction) 4, Meditation (Tantra) 4, Melee 3, Occult (Mystic Lore) 5, Politics 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge (Sexual Manipulation) 5, Survival (Traps) 4, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Arcane 4, Avatar 4, Influence 4, Library 5, Resources 5, Spies 6, Status (Nephandi Infernalists) 5,

Arete: 8

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 5, Forces 3, Life 5, Matter 3, Mind 4, Prime 5, Spirit 5, Time 3

Willpower: 9

Paradox: 9

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Attacks/ Powers: Jodi has the following Demonic Investments: Luciferian Charm (**Book of the Fallen**, p. 124), Moth into Flame (**Book of the Fallen**, p. 122), Search and Find (**Book of the Fallen**, p. 124)

Equipment: Jodi rarely carries any equipment, preferring to rely on her wit, charm, and magick to attain her goals.

Image: Jodi uses Life magick to alter her appearance frequently. She can look like anyone. While her chosen forms can come from any configuration of humanity, along any gender or cultural spectrums, she typically prefers feminine presentation with traits



considered conventionally attractive by local society.

Roleplaying Notes: You project control, confidence, and a slight air of mischief. This is a deliberate persona, which you've had centuries to craft. Beneath the surface, you're terrified. You know what awaits you when you lose your life. You've visited enough hells to know you wouldn't want to live in any of them. You've considered trying to slither out of your bargains, but you could find no exploitable loopholes. Your only hope to avoid damnation is to shred the Tellurian to nothingness. This is now your primary aim. While you're pretty good at concealing it, if someone makes you angry enough, you just might let your intentions slip.

Focus: Jodi learned centuries ago that *Forbidden Wisdom is the Truest Source of Power* (**Book of the Fallen**, p. 134). While she draws inspiration for her practice from a variety of sources, most of her workings fall under *Demonism* (**Book of the Fallen**, p. 140), *Feralism* (**Book of the Fallen**, p. 141), or *Vamamarga* (**Book of the Fallen**, p. 144).

Plot Hooks

Jodi is an infamous enemy of the Traditions with centuries of experience. That's never stopped her from screwing around in the lives of young, inexperienced mages in the past.

- **Before the Devil Knows:** Jodi approaches the mages under a flag of truce. If they don't start trying to kill her on sight, she begins begging for their help. She knows she's going to die soon, and when she does, her soul is doomed. She's desperate and has one final scheme that might be able to get her out of her

Future Fates: Darkness Everywhere

Jodi Blake is the archetypal Nephandus. As such, she can show up in any plot involving the Fallen such as those detailed in *Future Fates: The Reckoning and Sixth Age* (**Mage 20** p. 135), *Fallen Traditions?* (**Mage 20** p. 170), and *Future Fates: In Secrecy, This Infection...* (**Mage 20** p. 170). If including Jodi Blake in any of these plotlines, she's best used sparingly. While Jodi can be flamboyant and showy, she usually avoids such displays until there's a compelling reason to indulge them.

bargains. To pull it off, she needs the party's help, but she'll offer to fulfill any of their desires if they just help her get free of her master's yoke.

- **Hunting the Damned:** The mages hear rumors of a diabolic cult operating in their territory. The cult appears to be abducting people, sacrificing them in elaborate rituals, and dumping their mutilated bodies in the nearest forest. As they investigate the cult, they receive a warning to back off. This might come in the form of a verbal message passed along to an injured or tortured loved one, or perhaps in written form delivered in tandem with an organ belonging to one of the sacrificial victims.

Wild Cards

While the factions of the Ascension War provide clear lines of separation between mages, things are rarely so simple in the World of Darkness. Some mages of opposed factions can be enemies one moment and valuable allies the next. Others move between factions as their personal agendas demand, paying lip service to the rigid structures other mages measure themselves by. The mages profiled here can serve as quest-givers, opponents, confidants, or even life-saving allies swooping in to save the players' characters from certain doom. Whatever role they play in your chronicle, remember their agendas always come first. Any action they take — or any refusal to do so — should serve those agendas.

Secret Agent John Courage

John Courage was once among the Technocratic Union's finest and most efficient agents. For several years he served the New World Order as an exemplary Man in Black. As his missions grew more secretive and dangerous, John became wrapped up in the trappings of espionage. His reality began to conflict with the sterile dictates of the Union and his need for intrigue and intelligence overrode his conditioning. For a time, he teetered near the edge of Quiet. Each secret he uncovered drew him deeper into his own web of contradictory directives and pushed him closer to becoming a Marauder.

Ironically, it was the discovery of Nephandic corruption within the Technocratic Union that saved John from falling into Quiet. Though he'd always seen himself as a heroic figure of the Ascension War, it wasn't until he had to confront the possibility that the Union might be a tool of the Fallen that he was able to truly seize his own destiny. Leaning on the network of connections and favors he'd amassed over several years of playing double agent, John built the

network known as the Friends of Courage. This gave him a tool with which to fight back against corruption within the Union. It also drew the attention of allies outside the Technocracy's purview.

Now John and his allies stand at the precipice of a new age. If they can orchestrate their master plan, they might be able to save the Traditions and the Technocracy from the rot eating away at their insides. If luck is on their side, they just might be able to save the world while they're at it. It's that hope that keeps John Courage going.



Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Computer 5, Cosmology 2, Drive 2, Energy Weapons (implant ray) 5, Enigmas 4, Esoterica 2, Etiquette 1, Firearms (pistol) 5, Intimidation (implied threats) 4, Investigation 5, Law 2, Medicine 2, Meditation 4, Occult 2, Politics 3, Science 2, Stealth 6, Subterfuge 5, Technology 4

Backgrounds: Arcane 5, Avatar 4, Device 5, Enhancement 1, Status (Friends of Courage) 5, Spies 7

Merits: Language (Esperanto) 1

Enlightenment: 6

Spheres: Data 4, Entropy 2, Forces 4, Life 3, Matter 2, Mind 4, Primal Utility 3, Time 3

Willpower: 8

Paradox: 1

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 4 (Black Suit)

Equipment: John has an implant laser in his right index finger, which functions as a LL/AP-15 (**Technocracy Reloaded** p. 178). Enlightenment: 2, Primal Energy: 5, aimed with Dexterity + Energy Weapons and uses a Forces 2 effect for the purposes of determining damage.

Image: John is the archetypal Man in Black. His most distinct feature is a lack of distinct features. He normally hides his eyes behind mirrorshades and beneath the brim of a black fedora. He wears a black suit, often under a black trench coat or duster. Everyone he interacts with outside of his closest allies can barely string together a description of him even moments after an interaction.

Future Fates: A Web of Conspiracies

John Courage sits at the center of several possibilities in the Mage metaplot, especially any option that includes a Fallen Union, as detailed in *Future Fates: In Secrecy, This Infection...* (**Mage 20** p. 170). The Friends of Courage can exert influence in the Technocracy beyond the confines of the Project Invictus plotline (**Mage 20** p. 82) and needn't rely on the presence of a Fallen element to the Union if you'd prefer not to include it. If your Chronicle explores the Ascension Truce plot option (**Technocracy Reloaded** p. 221) it's likely John Courage is involved in some way. He also serves as an excellent source of intrigue and intelligence for mages of any faction, provided their goals align with his.

Roleplaying Notes: You're cool, calm, collected, and discreet. You speak rarely, keeping most interactions as brief as possible. You choose your words carefully and favor laconic interactions laced with doublespeak. Every interaction is intrigue, and an opportunity to advance an agenda. There's too much at stake to waste time and energy on pleasantries unless there's something to be gained from the exchange.

Focus: John believes reality is *A Mechanistic Cosmos* (**Mage 20** p. 568), but corrupt entities have layered complications and errors atop that core function. This supports the theory that Everything is an Illusion, Prison, or Mistake (**Mage 20** p. 570). He seeks to access the core principles of reality while manipulating the illusion to his advantage through *Cybernetics* (**Mage 20** p. 576), *Dominion* (**Mage 20** p. 577), *Hypertech* (**Mage 20** p. 579), and *Reality Hacking* (**Mage 20** p. 581).

Plot Hooks

John Courage leads a life of danger and intrigue. His machinations are complex and layered affairs. These are but a small sample of hooks that might involve Ascension's most notorious spy.

- **Handoff at the Spy's Demise:** A member of the troupe receives a message requesting a meeting at the Spy's Demise (see **Operative's Dossier** p. 67). The meeting specifies a date and time and contains a password — Lancaster—which should grant entry to the club. Any mage who knows their way around the Digital Web is aware that passwords to the Spy's Demise can be hard to come by, especially in advance. Apart from password and location, the message contains only a string of junk data that no amount of hacking or magick can make sense of. If they take the bait and head to the meeting, the mages receive VIP treatment once they

give the password at the door. They're escorted to a private room among the labyrinthine halls behind the bar, where Secret Agent John Courage awaits them. As soon as they enter the room, Courage stands up, hands the nearest member of the group a large manila envelope and whispers the word, "pingvino," in their ear before stepping out of the room. The envelope contains a detailed overview of prominent Society of Ether member Professor Vanessa Argo's personal schedule for the next seven days. No other details or context are included. It's unclear what information within the schedule is meant to be important and why it was passed off to the mages. They can try to hunt down John Courage for more information or begin keeping an eye on Professor Argo.

- **Missing Man of Mystery:** The mages are approached by Lee Ann Milner (p. XX) for help with an impossible task. John Courage has gone missing. Although Courage is prone to lengthy disappearances while working on a case, Milner insists something about this mission feels different. When they last spoke, Courage was heading into the city where the mages currently operate on a reconnaissance mission. Lee Ann doesn't know much about the specifics of the mission, only that John believed he'd uncovered Nephandi activity and was looking for evidence to confirm. Milner hopes the party's intimate knowledge of the city might help the search for John Courage succeed where magick alone would fail. Is John in the clutches of the Nephandi? Have the Fallen finally defeated the infamous Secret Agent? Was he drawn into some other, deeper mystery?

SUPPORTER

Alex Sorcerie	Elizabeth Panda Williams	Luca Di Benedetto	Robert D
Azure McLennan	F. Hayes 3	Matt M McElroy	Robert Ivan Haley
Bad Fish	Gareth Hodges	Matt Pascal	Roman Kuzyk
Ben Stone	Garga Lenoir	Michael Pineda	Ryan McWilliams
Chris Bashier	Gordon Pfeil	Mikko R.	Scott Kuban
Christian Higuti	heywizards	MonthOfJune	Shane Robinson
Dacar Aria Arundottir	Joe "The Librarian"	Mr. A	Simon Cotterill
Dace	Giammarco	Murilo Moura Sarno	T. Hughes "TheRogueX"
Daisychain	Keith Simmons	Nicolás Castagnet	T.Bardoux
Daniel "Dukal" Bell	Kevin "Blind Taste Tester"	Nicolas Milioni	Thaleia Flessa
Dead Gamers Society	Parker	Niklas Nordberg	Trey Byerly
Deanne Hausam	Laurel Newman	Olga A	Zintolly
Dweller on the Threshold	Lord Crossbower	Richard E. Cornman Jr.	

AKASHAYANA

A. Morange	Chris Whittle	Jamie Vann	Muskrat
Alyssa C	Cory "Rook" Williamsen	Jason Berteotti	Night Wonderer
Anders Holmstöm	Darksheer	Jason C Marshall	Nikhil Daniel Majumdar
Andrew McGregor	David Viars	Jeff Zitomer	Peter Ray Allison
Arien Lathander, Herald of the Akashayana	DB	Jeffrey Palmer	Richard brooks
AzurieL	DJ O'Brien	John Moseman	Robert D. Leonard Jr.
Baozhai Zhang, Stone-Fist God-Thief	Enantiodromos	John P Weatherman	sidai j.weeks
Ben Caldwell	Eric Fischer	John R. Trapasso	Sifu Dustin Rahn
Ben Stewart	Esteban LaSalle	John W. Luiza	Stormybo
Benedict Shek	Felix Daniels	Joshua Luther	Tatsuya
Chris "The Dragon"	Franck Ballestra	Kyle Morgan	Thad Green
Domakinis	Gobbos	Larry C	Wu Jie Kuan
	Guro Jon Navarro	Lee Carter	Ziv Ragowsky
	Hiromi Cota	Mason Finch	

CELESTIAL CHORUS

Almarion Saintclair	Charles Siegel	Jacob D. Fair	Martin "Grizzly" Lagace
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Anthony C.	Christian Kratz	James Ford	Michael Bruce
Arnodd "Hrafn" Heiriksson	Collin Pitalo	Janet Berkman	Michael McMorrow
Austin Haught	Craig Gaddis	Jason Corley	Michael Tree
Black Harkness	Danilo R G	JD Maynard	Mike C.
Brian W. Ackerley	Darius McCaskey	Jeremy Kopczynski	Nessalantha
Buck Gregory	David Thomas	Jon Pam	Nicholas Macula
C. Beau Sampson	Doug Harmon	Jonathan Head	Philipp Simon Kausch
C. Martin Coulter	Ethan Renwood	Joseph A Rosario	Phillip Bailey
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Candace Atwood	Heinrich Kraz	Kelly J Clark	Rev. Fr. Louis Thomas
Cardinal Patrick "Fianchetto" O'Leary	Hoots of Cymru	Kevin 'Kevle' Turner	Richard 'EllwynX' Ayars
Carson Hicks III	Ian Sargeant	Kimberly Morris	Richard N.
Chad Hazel-Kepler	Iesha Dover	Loren Valterza	Rob Lusteck
	Ilan Eman	Lucina	Rob Nadeau

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Sanpat Suvarnadat
Scott J. Molony

Simon 'Vylesse' Jones
Solomon

Stoney
Terry from Mage the Podcast

THE Donnie
Thomas Martin
Urdan Weisswasser

CULT OF ECSTASY

A. Walker
A.H. de Goeij
A.V. PixelTwist
Aaron Woodside
Adam & Looie Krump
Adam Beyonce Lowe
Adam Bowker
Alamias
Alan Orr
Alexa Draconis
Anderson Todd
Arabella Cross
Arlais
Balevala
Batro
Ben Heisler
Benton M
Björn S
Brandon Quina
Brendan Carrion
Brennen Willer
Brian McMurrer
Brian Rivers
Caleb Elahi
Cat Wall
Chase W.
Chris 'eChryxius' Wai
Chris Johnson
Christoph Juergensen
Christopher R. Wain
Cormac 'o' Malley
Corwyn Alambar
Cuervo Negro
D.S. Daugherty
Daemeon Hampton
Dan Keller
Dani Jang 뽀
Daniel K. Lundsby
Dante L
Dante Laughing-Coyote
Darkshifter
Dave Desgagnes
David Connell Olsher

Derek W. Branim
Divya Claire Blessing bani
Ecstatic
Dolph Cox
Dominic Constantine
Donnalee Dermady-Minney
Donny "Kender" Pascale
Dorian Franklin
Dr Oru
Dr. Lewis Johnston
Eidan Rodriguez
Elke Normab
Elu
Emely Lenaris
Eric Larson
Etienne Etoile
Evan "JabberWokky" and Sarah
Edwards
Faust Crowley
Feian
Franco Frare
Freehold DM
Fuzzy Mushroom Head
G. Koutsikos
Gabriel Sorrel
Garon Niehaus
Götz Weinreich
Guenhwyvar
Hector Fuchs
Indi Latrani
James Ely
James Piper
Jason Frank
Jason Vines
Jay Morris
jaymi elford
JAYSON "the14thguest"
TURNER
Jeff Robin
Jen1701D
Jerry D.
Joachim Treimmer
John A. David

John B.
Johnnie Nemec
Jon Kennedy
Julio C. Novais Raffaine
Julio Rodrigues
Kat Roy
Kevin Miller
Kim Cicconi
Kyle Walker
LeAnn 'Ellyham' LaFollette
Leopold's Ghost
Lisa Padol
Luke Parsons
Lyonesse
M.Koeper
Mak Kakuk
Marco Generoso
Mark Hope
Matilha da Kombi
Matthew Smith
Maximilian Willson
Michael B. Snapp
Michael E. Reeves
Michael Laitinen
Michael O. Holland
Minerva Michaelson
Mouse
Naomi Cross
Navjeet Kapoor
Néophyte
Nickolas Kik
Nikephorus Vlachos
Noah J. Nelson
Nuno Theodoro
Odanuki
Pantalaimon
Pariah77
Patrick Ley
Pooka G
R. B. LeMoyné
Rachel Grace
Rathen
Reuben Israel Beattie

Richard Badger
Robert "Luca" Tuck
Robert "Riley" Riley
Robert Donnelly
Robyn "Tish Auditore"
Sanderson
Ronan Roué
Ryan Kendy
Sabrina Horsley
Sammy Childress
Sara Miryam
Sara Stewart
Scott James Abiusi
Scott Kelley Ernest
Sean Gallagher
Sebastian Oregel
Serhiy Hrishchenko
Shane Fowler
Shawn P
Shawn Roberts
Sidewinder and Ralph
Simon Beaver
Sophie Addams
Stephen Cheney
Stephen Post
Tamuz
Tess
The Great Argento
Thierry De Gagne
Thomas Haakinen
Timothy Mushel
Tony James Peacock
Tyler J Cvetan
U.B.
Vampyre Bytes
Vegard Kivle
Vladimir "Dr Richard
Cavendish - Chrononaut"
Tierney
Wilhelm von Karolinas, the
younger
WJ Netterville

DREAMSPEAKERS

Andrew G.	Glenn Clifford	Linda "Eel" Lee	Paul "Vesta" Williams
Anja Kraus	Harma	Luke Brewer	Pawel Daruk
Becky Glenn	Henrik Augustsson	Lulie Tanett (@reasonisfun)	Quire (Jeremy Pignat)
Bill Barnhill	Isaiah Hall	Malu Castro	Ralbro
Brennan Willingham	J Rintamaki	Marc Robitschek	Rhombus Ticks
Brian and Denetra Clark	J.W. Walker; Brandon Hodges	Martin Bluefield	Robert Biskin
Christophe Garrigue	Jade Regina Gofourth	Martin V Ottesen	S.A. Nickens
Christopher 'Mosser' Morrell	Jahaeng Park	Melnuur	Saleem Halabi
Cintain 昆遊龍	Jaikula Freedom	Michael J. Marchand	Salvador y Patricio Montes
Clayton Moore	James "Speaks-with-Pups" Wagner	Micheal Elliott	Scott Ephriam Vigil
Crispen Gray	James Surano	Michele Marie Arko	Scott P. Kelly
Dan 'Credorion' Griffith	Jason Ross Incz	Mike Macary	Shadowblaze
Dániel Winkler	Jeremy Hochhalter	Mike R.	Stormshot
Dawid "Dievas" Wojcieszynski	John Lambert	Moth	T. Yuen
Don Lupe, Brujo Platicador	John Vikør Green, og kattene	Nathaniel "Man Cub" Walker	Takota Ironhorse
Doug Geisler	Sin og Sofia	Nejlah al-Rahab, Gangrel	The Chronic Artificer
Dr. Wm. Peter Montague	justchris	Antitribu	Thomas Maund
DrBang	Ken Lewis	Nell Crosby	Tobi Le Lémurien
Ebenezer McFarlane	Kevin C. Wilbon	Nickolis Strafford	Tom O'Bedlam
Esterita Rosiana	King Clive Lovecraft	Nixelleborus Mahema	Trollune
Fabio Abilio Gomes de Almeida	Lance Hosaka	Njeri Biaka	Zachary Thomas Tyler
Francis Renault	Lark Cunningham	Olivier Jobin	Zantigui Dialo
Gael f	Liam K.	Olympic Cards and Comics	
		Oomizuao	

EUTHANATOS

A. Leslie	Cynthia Jerkins	Elijah B Dixon III	Johnathan Harker
Adam Horne	Daggothus	Epitaph	Jose of Burgos
Adam Safwat	Dani Meir	Frédéri "Volk Kommissar	Joseph "First Team" Coyle
Adrian Fahrenheits	Daniel "Illuminos" Persson	Friedrich "POCHARD	Josh Moberly
Alwin Penterman	Daniel L. Gochnauer	Glitz	Joshua Edwards
André Escribano	Daniel Scribner	h MacKiernan	Joshua Upton
Andrei Antonio Gonzalez Reyes	Daniel Tracy	Heath Harger	JT Ho
Andrew "Grimmy" Grim	Darin Du Mez	Henry F. Bruckman Vargas	Justin C' de Baca
Arden Mors	Darkheed Ebonvoid	Ian Hamilton	K. Blueriver
Bael the Cruel	Dave "Horus" Harrison	Ian Smith	Karl Hagen Mann
Ben Dinsmore	David "Just" Talboy	Illara Sunsum	Kassiopeia
Benn Mer	David Futterer	Indigo Shade	Kimberly Godwin
Black Absinthe	David Lee Terhune	Ivo de Mooij	Kirt LeBlanc
Brannen	David Ramsden	J. Noah Wiley	Knyghtshayde
Brian Cooksey	David Roehe	J. Tuomas Harviainen	Kristopher Deters
Bryan Kash-Gregory	David Rose Fraser	J. W. Bennett	Lee Moneta-Koehler
Casey Caston	Davin Wärter	Jaime M Garmendia III	LeJay
Cat Evans	Dennis Chiaravalle Jr.	Jarrold of Usher	Leukadius Gomes Grecco
Cedar Kilcrease	Derek Grimm	Jason Freston	Pachis Kaprós
Celeste	Dirk R.	Jen Nelson	Luke Maclean
Charan DuFrançois	Dr Simon Exton	Jim Urquhart	Mahesh Mohan
Chris Jones	Dr. Aurora Yangtse	Joe McNamara	Maledicta
Colin R. Jones	Eder "Carhuanah Ufrahd"	Johannes Jørgensen	Marci DeLeon
Crystal Mazur	Barbosa	John C Spainhour	Marcos Almeida Leite Bomfim

Mark Pittman	November	Sam Young	Blackstone
Mark Pryce	Nyk Huntington	Savan Gupta, Ācārya (आचार्य)	Tiradorm
Mathieu Guittard	Ollie & Maddie	Scott F. Couchman	Todd Thomas
Matt Miller	Ols Jonas Petter Olsson	Sean Hamilton	Tom Hillennbrand
Matt 'Nebus' Hufstetler	Palpacwel	Selena Victoria Knight	Tremal-Naik
Matthew Oakes	Patrick Tella	Shane Rose	Troy Lenze
Matthew Russo	Paul "Anorak" Record	Simon Brake	Tyler Bryan
Melissa Krause	Paul E. Smart	Simon R. Cooper	V. Kruger
Michael "Job Klayde" Brosens	Peter A. Pena	Sobriquet	vincent furstenberger
Michael Alexis	Péter Gyűlvérsi	Stalks-the-Reef	Vincent Shadowlight
Michael Chernicoff	Pośnik Rafał	Star Eagle	Warren Locke
Michael Steamweed	Quasi	Starck	Warren P Nelson
Michael 'Xero' Illott	Rafe Richards	Stéphane "Je ne suis pas goth"	WebTangler
Mike Ruch	Random	Zuckerman	Wil Brown
Morrigan	Raphael Bourdot	Sterling L.	William Dexter
N. McCoy	Ray Heyberger	Steven "Goat" Collins	Yashoda I.
Nathaniel O'Neil	Richard J Rivera Mas	Tadhg MacCionnaith	Yohan Odivart
Nicholas Andre L. J.	Rob Bessey	Ted Pertzborn	Yves "Morkeoth" Chabirand
Nick Nigro	Rowan, Keeper of the Hearth	The Charnel God	Z. Hammond
Noble Knight Games	Saint Marcus	Tim Yablonsky	Zfglx
Noble Thayer Graves, Clan Tremere	Salem Pulsifer	Tim-Oliver Cramer	
		Timothy "Noisecode"	

ORDER OF HERMES

A. Sendner	Ardinzul	Chris Aylott	Darin Kerr
Aaron Berkowitz	Astrid Portner	Chris Cowger	Darla Burrow
Aaron Potheary	B. Hill	Chris L	David Chart
Adam "MagusRogue" Loyd	Badger	Chris Mawford	Dávid Czégé
Adam Karpolorich	Ben Hutchings	chris settlemoir	David 'dj' Coleman
Adam Simpson	Ben McFarland	Christian J. Müller	David Doucey
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 Matthew Clay
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 Johan Fält
 Johan Van Malderen
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 Sutton"
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 Brotherhood of the Druids
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 waelcyrg
 Winardlley Nardson Lima
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 A.M.Goodnight
 Aaron Riutta

Adam & Amanda Fry
 Adam "El Duce" Doochin
 Adam 'Shadowfox' Tullett
 AL Lajeunesse

Alberto Calsolaro
 Alex Context
 Alex Gagnon
 Alexandre Kerscher Souza

Alf O'Mega
 Aliénor "AdeptaPy_663" N.
 Alonso O. Rubio
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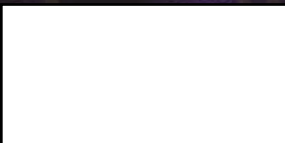
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The Secrets of the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions Revealed!

In the face of the growing threat presented by the Order of Reason, mystick mages from across the globe came together for a Grand Convocation in the hopes of finding mutual defense and turning the tide of the nascent Ascension War. Now, with over five hundred years of history behind them, the membership of the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions must reconcile its past and forge a new path into the 21st century. Lore of the Traditions explores the history, practices, and politics of each current member of the Council of Nine. This book lays bare the secrets and shame of the Traditions, recounting past tragedy and triumph, and details how each of these magickal societies approaches the quest for Ascension heading into the mid-21st century.



20th ANNIVERSARY EDITION
MAGE
THE ASCENSION

